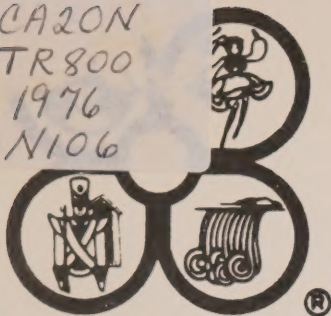
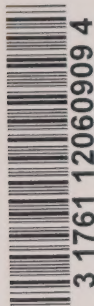


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## NIAGARA REGION STUDY REVIEW COMMISSION

### MASS MEDIA IN THE NIAGARA REGION

A Background Report Prepared by

William H. N. Hull, Ph.D.

Department of Politics

Brock University

November 1976

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# NIAGARA REGION STUDY REVIEW COMMISSION

## THE MASS MEDIA AND THEIR ROLE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE NIAGARA REGION

A Background Report Prepared by  
William H. N. Hull, Ph.D.  
Department of Politics  
Brock University  
November 1976



This report has been prepared upon request of William L. Archer, Commissioner, appointed by the Treasurer of the Province of Ontario to undertake an independent study review of local government in the Region of Niagara.

The conclusions presented in this Background Report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Niagara Region Study Review Commission.

The final report of the Commission will be submitted to the Treasurer of the Province of Ontario on or before January 15, 1977. After that date, inquiries should be made to the Local Government Organization Branch, Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs, Queen's Park, Toronto (965-6934).



The following Background Reports have been prepared for the Commission and are available from the Commission offices or the Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs:

- (1) Electoral System in the Niagara Region  
— M. J. Powell
- (2) Environment Ministry — Farm Tax Rebate: Two Case Studies, Provincial Municipal Relations in the Niagara Region  
— Smith, Auld & Associates Ltd.
- (3) Fire Protection in the Niagara Region  
— Dr. R. Church
- (4) Industrial Promotion in the Niagara Region  
— Smith, Auld & Associates Ltd.
- (5) Land Use Planning in the Niagara Region  
— Dr. J. N. Jackson
- (6) Mass Media in the Niagara Region  
— Dr. W. H. N. Hull
- (7) Municipal Organization in the Niagara Region  
— Dr. R. Church
- (8) Public Finance in the Niagara Region  
— Dr. Lewis A. Soroka

## Summary

The study examines the role of the mass media in the Regional Municipality of Niagara with special reference to their coverage of the political life of the Region as manifest through its 13 governing councils. The study begins with an inventory of the media resources, physical and human, and continues with a quantitative analysis of the coverage of regional and municipal matters in the three daily and eight weekly newspapers of the Region. A qualitative analysis of the newspapers, radio stations and cable systems based on responses to mailed questionnaires, extensive in-depth interviews and personal observation follows. Brief comment is made upon the non-regional media which penetrate the area. The study ends with conclusions about the media scene in the Region and recommendations for the improvement of political coverage.

Publicly, there seems to be general satisfaction with the performance of the media. Privately there appears to be less satisfaction as the interviews brought out examples of certain weaknesses in the media performance. These weaknesses are attributable in part to factors which could be corrected, in part to factors beyond human control. The greatest weaknesses lie in the parochial nature of the media, in the alleged superficiality of the weeklies and in the general absence of background coverage.

As region-wide daily media outlets are unlikely in the foreseeable future, it is suggested that the present media improve their coverage of matters of regional concern and their efforts at reflecting one part of the Region to another. They could improve their performance by undertaking greater co-operative efforts amongst themselves and by more consistent announcements of and background reporting concerning meetings of the governing councils. It is also suggested that the Regional Municipality should noticeably improve its co-ordination of its public information efforts, that it should make greater use of the cable facilities of the Region and that those area municipalities which still retain closed meetings should, with limited qualification, open them to the media and the public.



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Deep thanks are due to a great many people who have contributed generously to the progress of this study. To Mr. Archer, Mr. Richard Loreto, Mrs. Charlene Waters and other members of the Commission's staff, to all those in the media or governing bodies who kindly answered questionnaires or granted interviews, to Mrs. Pam Charlwood and Mrs. Pat Miller, to Mr. W. Bozzato, Mrs. Bev. Delaney and Mr. M. A. Quddus, to all these for those kindnesses which each knows best, a great debt of gratitude is owed. Of course, each is absolved of any responsibility for errors, omissions or faulty conclusions. The principle investigator alone must accept responsibility for them.

## INTRODUCTION

"The Gatekeeper".<sup>1</sup> "The Uncertain Mirror".<sup>2</sup> These are two concepts which I borrow from two recent Canadian studies of information services and the media to highlight this report on the media in the Niagara Region. I borrow them without apologies for lack of originality because I feel they characterize in a most fitting way the role and the impact of the media of the Region more cogently and succinctly than any new phrases I might coin.

In a very real sense, the media are gatekeepers of news and public information. As one editor said in an interview, "If we do not print it, it is not news". The media, both print and electronic, are the recipients of news and information from a variety of sources - local, regional, national, international, formal, informal, free, inexpensive, dear. According to the technical and space limitations of the particular medium, the policies of its management and the sensibilities of its editor, that vast quantity of news must be condensed, cut and shaped to fit the time or space available. In the process a great deal will be cut out, meanings may be changed, emphasis will be added or subtracted with the net effect being that the picture presented may well differ from the original. The reflection of society being cast may not be accurate. The gatekeeper in performing his function may well, intentionally or not, turn his medium into an uncertain mirror.

Any piece of information travels through a particular process, passing through channels, gaining clearance at certain check points along the way, being delayed or altered at other points. The check points are the gates; the individuals or organizations who operate the gates are the gatekeepers. All of us as individuals are at one time or another part of a communication process. In our family lives, in our social lives, in our working lives, we transmit some messages and refuse to transmit others. We modify still others perhaps by over-emphasizing aspects of some or de-emphasizing aspects of others. In performing

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1. Canada, Task Force on Government Information, To Know and Be Known, Vol. II (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969) pp. 115-118.
  2. Canada, Parliament, The Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, Report, Vol. 1, The Uncertain Mirror (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970).



this role we as individuals normally affect a relatively small number of people who are placed on either side of us in the particular communications pattern. The media, however, because they are in the profession of transmitting news and because they are a mass phenomena, affect the lives of thousands daily with a single sentence, a headline or a lead story.

The media, as gatekeepers<sup>3</sup>, occupy a profoundly significant place in society because of the power which they possess to cut off or to alter any piece of information. The gatekeeper is not just a passive force allowing anything that comes along to pass, or merely closing the gate on part of a message as it seeks to pass. He plays a creative role when he alters the message by changing its words or when he adds or subtracts emphasis by the size, headlining or position given to the message. In essence, the gatekeeper has the power to delete the message, to pass it unaltered, to enhance its importance by one form of treatment or to allow it to pass but diminish its importance by another form of treatment.<sup>4</sup> Because of the limitations of time and/or space, some alteration in most messages is going to be necessary. Distortion of some sort will occur, either systematic or random. The first will occur through deliberate bias, conscious or unconscious; the second will occur through carelessness or ignorance.

Yet it must not be forgotten that the media have certain set roles to play in society and that traditionally broad standards of performance have been expected of them. Historically, the general functions of the media have been to inform, to educate, to entertain and to sell. The informing is done by the gathering, the interpreting and the publishing of the news. Editorials, editorial cartoons, letters to the editor, literary and artistic reviews, feature articles and in-depth commentary in addition to the news contribute to the educational process. The comics,

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3. Much of the comment in the next few paragraphs dealing with the "gatekeeper" concept is drawn from Hiebert, R. D. et. al., Mass Media (New York: McKay, 1974), pp. 106-115. A more detailed discussion can be found therein.
  4. The classic case in recent years of media distortion is, of course, the television coverage of the riots which occurred during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.



the sports pages, the gossip columns, the crossword puzzles and possibly some of the categories previously mentioned contribute to the entertainment. The advertisements carried fulfill the selling role.

The prime concern of this study is obviously with the first two roles, basically with the transmission of news for the purposes of informing and educating. In examining these roles, the traditional criteria of quality in news coverage will be brought to bear: accuracy, fairness, balance and objectivity.<sup>5</sup> Overall, it is the intent of the study to ask how well the media of the Region, the gatekeepers of the news, perform their tasks of informing and educating and, in part at least, how well they reflect the political life of the Region.

To achieve this end, the study has been divided into four basic parts. The first contains an inventory of both the print and electronic media resources of the Region. The second part consists of a quantitative analysis of the coverage of regional politics, particularly in the print media, while the third section becomes more subjective in attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of the media. The final part contains certain conclusions and recommendations about the performance of the media and about the practices of regional governing bodies in making material available to the media and the public.

Methodologically, each part has its own peculiarities. The basic data for the media inventory came from a variety of sources, with the media outlets themselves providing the lion's share of it. The quantitative analysis is based on column-inch measurements taken from the regional papers during two fixed periods specified by the Commissioner, November-December 1974 and May-June 1976. The first period coincides with the 1974 regional elections while the second coincides with the last round of major public meetings of the Commission. All four sections, but the third in particular, have been influenced by the results of a questionnaire sent to all members of Regional Council and of personal interviews conducted with some forty-nine newspaper publishers and editors, station managers and news directors, press and radio news reporters and members of the Council or staff of Regional Niagara and the area municipalities.

The study is in a very real sense only half a study.

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5. Hiebert, op. cit., p. 343.

Numerous limitations precluded the completion of any surveys of the reading or listening publics. What purports to be a study in mass communication looks at only one side of the process, the transmitting process. Hopefully later opportunities will arise for detailed studies of the receivers in order that the impact of the media's efforts may be more fully understood. In the meantime the conclusions of this study must remain all the more tentative.

A conscious effort has been made to separate fact from opinion and personal prejudices from considered judgments. But just as every editor will know, one person's thoughtful wisdom is another person's foolish nonsense. Since undertaking this study, I have been heard to complain privately about newspaper editors or reporters who claim to know with certainty what the people like or dislike, understand or misunderstand, want or do not want - seemingly arrogating unto themselves an omniscience not common in your ordinary human being. I now find myself embarking on the self-same journey! The so-called hard data will carry one only so far. One can only hope that the end result will appear to contain more thoughtful wisdom than foolish nonsense.





## CHAPTER 1

### A Media Inventory

The Regional Municipality of Niagara is served by a wide range of media outlets in both the print and the electronic form. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 give an indication of the extent of media service in absolute terms and in relation to the rest of Ontario and Canada. Appendix I lists all the regional outlets included in this study. For the purposes of our analysis, the media outlets available in the Region have been divided into two broad categories, those which are originated in the Region and those which penetrate the Region but are originated outside it. Four sub-categories will be used: the daily newspaper, the weekly or community newspaper, the radio station and the cable system.

#### A. Regional Media

(i) The Daily Newspapers: Three daily newspapers serve the Region, one published in each of the three major cities, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland.

The St. Catharines Standard, owned by the St. Catharines Standard Limited, has Henry B. Burgoyne as its President and Publisher and L. N. Smith as its Editor-in-Chief. Its circulation as of March 31, 1976 was approximately 40,775, about three quarters of that in the Cities of St. Catharines and Thorold and the northern portions of what was Welland County, about one quarter in the surrounding portions of what was Lincoln County. The Standard is the dominant daily paper in the area municipalities of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham and Lincoln. The paper claims to be generally supportive of the concept of regional government but critical of many aspects of its operation.

The Standard employs 27 reporters, 13 of whom are involved in the reporting of the politics of the Region. Three cover the Regional Council and its committees, two the St. Catharines City Council and committees, one each the Lincoln, the Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Pelham and the Thorold Councils and the four regional school boards.

TABLE 1.1 MEDIA OUTLETS: CANADA, ONTARIO AND THE NIAGARA REGION, 1975

	Canada	Ontario	Niagara Region
Daily Newspapers	118	49	3
Weekly Newspapers	794 <sup>1</sup>	249 <sup>1</sup>	8
Radio Stations - AM	370	96	4
" " - FM	92	38	2
Cable Systems	419	125	3
Population	22,800,000	8,226,000	358,662

1. Includes a few semi-weeklies and tri-weeklies.

Sources: Newspaper figures - Ayer's Directory of Publications 1976, pp. 921-995.  
 Electronic Media figures - Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Annual Report, 1974-75, pp. 34-35.  
 Population figures - Ayer's Directory of Publications, 1976, p. 919, and Regional Niagara, Data Book, 1976, p. 3.

TABLE 1.2 MEDIA OUTLETS PER 100,000 OF POPULATION: CANADA, ONTARIO AND NIAGARA REGION, 1975

	Canada	Ontario	Niagara Region
Daily Newspapers	0.5	0.6	0.8
Weekly Newspapers	3.5 <sup>1</sup>	3.0 <sup>1</sup>	2.2
Radio Stations - AM	1.6	1.2	1.1
" " - FM	0.4	0.5	0.6
Cable Systems	1.8	1.5	0.8

1. Includes a few semi-weeklies and tri-weeklies.

Sources: As in Table 1.1.

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government, although, at the moment, its Editor is concerned about the supply of certain regional services to the Municipality and about the calibre of municipal politics.

Its news staff consists of one full-time reporter in the person of the Editor and a number of rural stringers. The Editor attempts to cover all appropriate municipal affairs, but normally relies on outside sources to provide news of regional government.

All four of the papers owned by The Standard share copy about regional government. This copy is usually prepared by the Independent and then partially rewritten by the other Editors to highlight the pertinent local issues for their respective papers.

The Fort Erie Times-Review, published each Wednesday, has a circulation of approximately 4,600 papers concentrated essentially in the Municipality of Fort Erie. Its Publisher is Barbara Ann Scott and its Editor, Bob Thomas. The paper maintains no editorial policy for or against regional government.

The news staff of the Times-Review consists of the Editor and two reporters-photographers. Years of service in reporting political affairs for the paper ranges from one to four years although one of the reporters is a life long resident of the city.

All municipal council and committee meetings are covered. Regional Council meetings used to be covered but no longer are. Telephone contact is maintained with the Region and news is provided by the area representatives on Regional Council and by the daily newspapers.

The Herald of Pelham is published each Tuesday in Font-hill. It is owned by Roger Brabant of Grimsby who also owns the Stoney Creek News, the Ancaster News, the Dundas Star and Mountain News. Frank Whitty is the Business Manager and Reeta Potts the Editor. Its circulation of 1,800 is concentrated almost entirely in the Municipality of Pelham. The paper does not carry editorials on a regular basis although it does carry locally-created editorial cartoons, some of which deal thoughtfully with the problems of governing the Region.

The news staff of the paper consists of the Editor and one stringer in Fenwick. The Editor has been with the paper

These reporters have other responsibilities to fulfill, their involvement in the civic reporting ranging from 40 to 80 percent of their time.<sup>1</sup> Niagara Falls, Welland, Grimsby and West Lincoln are covered by stringers.

The Publisher succeeded to his position two years ago on the death of the previous Publisher, Mr. Ross Bates, while the Editor-in-Chief has been associated with the paper for many years and its Editor-in-Chief for 20 years. The length of service in political reporting of the five reporters involved in covering regional or St. Catharines affairs, ranges from one and one-half years to seven years.

It is The Standard's policy to cover all the Council and Committee meetings of the Region and of the area municipalities mentioned above. It is looked upon as something of "a paper of record" in the Region, and because of the location of Regional Headquarters in St. Catharines, is responsible for feeding regional stories into the Canadian Press wire service.

The Niagara Falls Review is owned by the Thomson newspaper chain. Gordon A. Murray is its Publisher and Georgs Kolesnikovs its Managing Editor. Its circulation as of March 31, 1976 was approximately 20,000, nearly 85 percent of which was centred in the City of Niagara Falls. Fort Erie received over 85 percent of the remaining papers with the circulation of the rest being scattered through the eastern end of the Region. The paper claims no particular editorial policy for or against regional government, but maintains its freedom to praise or criticize as it sees fit.

The Review employs a staff of 20 in the editorial department. Five of these cover the affairs of the Region, the area municipalities of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake, and the two Niagara South Boards of Education.

The Publisher assumed his position two years ago, having served with the paper previously as Executive Editor. The Managing Editor has served in the capacity for two years, having previously served as City Editor. Three of the five reporters have had five to ten years experience. A bureau is maintained in Fort Erie.

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1. It is recognized that with all of the media, but especially the daily newspapers, these figures given concerning human resource allocation are at best estimates. On special occasions many more people may be put to work on a particular project. The figures used here try to represent a normal daily routine.

The Evening Tribune of Welland-Port Colborne is also owned by the Thomson chain. Ab S. Topp is its Publisher and D. Amor its Manager Editor. The paper's circulation as of March 31, 1976 was about 18,000 -- 10,700 of which went to Welland, 4,000 to Port Colborne. Within the Region, distribution also extends to Fort Erie, Wainfleet and Pelham where The Tribune runs The Standard a very close race as the dominant daily. The paper follows an editorial policy which suggests that regional government is theoretically correct, but, that as presently constituted, it has flaws and deficiencies that should be corrected.

The Tribune maintains a staff of 14 full-time reporters and one part-time reporter with the time of about three and three-quarters reporters being devoted to the coverage of regional and municipal affairs.

The Publisher has served five years in his position; the Editor joined the paper only recently replacing P. A. Tissington, the Editor for the past four years; the reporters have experience ranging between two and seven years. Within the Region, the paper maintains bureaux in Port Colborne and Fort Erie. As a matter of policy, an effort is made to cover council and committee meetings, where permitted, at both regional and municipal levels and the Niagara South school boards on all matters that affect the readers within the paper's circulation area.

(ii) The Weekly Newspapers: The eight weekly papers vary considerably in size and scope from each other and their daily brethren. Four of them are owned by one of the dailies, The St. Catharines Standard. All but the Niagara Advance were acquired by The Standard before the creation of Regional Niagara. These four will be examined first.

The Grimsby Independent: Publisher, Wm. J. Poirier and Phil Dechman, Editor. The paper which is published each Wednesday, has a circulation of about 4,000 concentrated largely in the Grimsby area, with perhaps 500 or so copies going to Lincoln and West Lincoln. The paper has no set editorial policy toward regional government, but the feeling is held that regional government has an important job to do and that parts of it could be done better. The paper takes an active role in supporting municipal causes.



The news staff of the paper consists of the Editor, two reporters and a photographer. The Editor has had seven years experience with the paper, but the others have had much less experience in the Region -- ranging from one to three years. Meetings of municipal council and committees, where permitted, are attended regularly, but meetings of regional bodies are not covered unless there is some particularly burning issue thought by the Editor to be of interest to readers of the paper.

The Lincoln Post Express, published each Wednesday in Beamsville, has J. G. McGregor as its General Manager and W. F. Rannie as its Editor. Its circulation of 2,500 copies is concentrated almost entirely in the Municipality of Lincoln. The paper has no specific editorial policy towards regional government although it does try consciously to help unite the disparate communities of the Municipality of Lincoln.

The news staff of the paper consists of the Editor and two reporters. The Editor, the previous owner of the paper, has been associated with the Region and paper for over 30 years. Little effort is made to cover regional government, although the municipal council and committees are regularly covered.

The Niagara Advance, published each Thursday in Niagara-on-the-Lake, has as its General Manager, W. J. Poirier, and as its Editor, Shirley Dickson. Its circulation of 1,800 copies is concentrated in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area. The paper has no set editorial policy towards regional government, preferring to give praise or criticism where and when it seems appropriate.

The news staff of the paper consists of the Editor and one part-time assistant. The Editor has been with the paper for two years. Regional government meetings are not usually covered whereas those meetings of municipal bodies open to the press are covered.

The West Lincoln Review is published each Wednesday in Smithville. Its General Manager is J. G. McGregor and its Editor, Roland Smith. Its circulation of 2,000 is concentrated fairly well in the Township of West Lincoln, where it has a penetration of 81 per cent of the homes of the Municipality. It has no specific policy towards regional

government, although, at the moment, its Editor is concerned about the supply of certain regional services to the Municipality and about the calibre of municipal politics.

Its news staff consists of one full-time reporter in the person of the Editor and a number of rural stringers. The Editor attempts to cover all appropriate municipal affairs, but normally relies on outside sources to provide news of regional government.

All four of the papers owned by The Standard share copy about regional government. This copy is usually prepared by the Independent and then partially rewritten by the other Editors to highlight the pertinent local issues for their respective papers.

The Fort Erie Times-Review, published each Wednesday, has a circulation of approximately 4,600 papers concentrated essentially in the Municipality of Fort Erie. Its Publisher is Barbara Ann Scott and its Editor, Bob Thomas. The paper maintains no editorial policy for or against regional government.

The news staff of the Times-Review consists of the Editor and two reporters-photographers. Years of service in reporting political affairs for the paper ranges from one to four years although one of the reporters is a life long resident of the city.

All municipal council and committee meetings are covered. Regional Council meetings used to be covered but no longer are. Telephone contact is maintained with the Region and news is provided by the area representatives on Regional Council and by the daily newspapers.

The Herald of Pelham is published each Tuesday in Font-hill. It is owned by Roger Brabant of Grimsby who also owns the Stoney Creek News, the Ancaster News, the Dundas Star and Mountain News. Frank Whitty is the Business Manager and Reeta Potts the Editor. Its circulation of 1,800 is concentrated almost entirely in the Municipality of Pelham. The paper does not carry editorials on a regular basis although it does carry locally-created editorial cartoons, some of which deal thoughtfully with the problems of governing the Region.

The news staff of the paper consists of the Editor and one stringer in Fenwick. The Editor has been with the paper

for seven years. Municipal council meetings are covered regularly and committee meetings as staff resources allow. Regional meetings are not covered. Reliance for regional news is placed on The St. Catharines Standard, the regional Blue Book<sup>2</sup> and those matters brought out by the regional representative at the municipal meetings.

The Port Colborne News, published each Wednesday in Port Colborne, has as its publisher, J. C. R. McKnight and its Editor, V. Schmidt. It is owned by Otter Publishing which also owns papers in Tillsonburg, Ingersoll and Norwich. Its normal circulation is about 4,000, the bulk of which goes into Port Colborne homes, with about 300 going to Wainfleet and 100 to Stevensville. The paper claims no specific editorial policy for or against regional government.

The news staff consists of two full-time and three part-time people. All are relatively new to the paper, none having more than two years experience with it. The general policy is to cover all municipal council and committee meetings, but no regional meetings of any sort. News about regional matters comes from the daily press, the Regional Councillors or the meetings of the City Council.

The Thorold News, published each Thursday, has a circulation of 5,200, all but a 100 or so of which go to each home in the Municipality of Thorold. It is published by the Thorold News Co. Ltd. with Hugo Farney its Editor. It carries no editorials.

The paper has a staff of two, both of whom have had considerable experience in the area. Municipal meetings are covered but regional ones are not. News of the Region is sometimes used as filler, but the paper is seldom short of material.

(iii) The Radio Stations: Of the four radio stations in the Region, CKTB St. Catharines is the oldest, having been formed in 1930. It is owned by the Niagara District Broad-

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2. The document in question is formally entitled the Proceedings of the Municipal Council of the Regional Municipality of Niagara, but for the purposes of this study it will be referred to by the name it has acquired from the colour of its cover, the Blue Book.



casting Limited, the president of which is Mary C. Burgoyne and the News Director, Al Van Alstine. The station has a power of 10,000 watts at 610 kHz.

The news staff consists of seven reporters who cover the Regional Council, the St. Catharines City Council and Committees, the Niagara-on-the-Lake and Thorold Councils, the two Lincoln County School Boards and occasionally the Grimsby Council. The regular Region and City reporters average over three years experience each, but consistent assignments are at times made difficult because of the union contract with the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians.

CKTB-FM broadcasts with a power of 100,000 watts power on 97.7 MKz. Its news programming is essentially the same as that on AM although, because of the somewhat less rigorous commercial format, somewhat more in-depth information programming is attempted.

The youngest station in the Region is also located in St. Catharines. CHSC-AM is owned by Radio Station CHSC Limited. R. E. Redmond is its President and Jim Marino its News Director. It broadcasts with a power of 1,000 watts on an assigned frequency at 1220 kHz.

The information staff consists of eight people, one of whom is assigned regularly to cover Regional and St. Catharines and Thorold City Council meetings, and the Lincoln County Boards of Education. Committee meetings are not covered. Other municipal councils, the Niagara South School Board and the Welland Separate School Board are covered for special events. The reporter has had three years' experience on the job.

CHSC-FM broadcasts with a power of 100,000 watts on 105.7 MHz. The news programming on FM is essentially the same as that on AM.

CJRN Niagara Falls is owned by Radio Niagara Limited, J. O'Brien, President, and W. Shepherd, News Director. It broadcasts on 710 kHz with a power of 5,000 watts.

Its reporters number seven, no one of which is assigned to cover the Region regularly. Municipal council is covered more regularly, but in each case only if the News Editor feels that something of interest to his listeners will be discussed. Committee meetings are not usually covered.

CHOW, Welland-Port Colborne, is owned by Wellport Broadcasting Limited, G. W. Burnett, President, and F. Sernach, News Director. It broadcasts with a power of 1,000 watts on 1470 kHz.

The news staff consists of four full-time people, four part-time stringers and five people from Niagara College who function on a full-time or part-time basis depending upon the time of the year. All Regional Council meetings are covered, but no regional committees unless something considered to be of interest to the station's broadcasting area is being discussed. The meetings of the Councils of the Municipalities of Pelham, Port Colborne, Thorold and Welland are covered regularly, while the Councils of Niagara Falls and St. Catharines are covered for special events. The Committees of the City of Welland are covered where permitted. The principal full-time reporters average ten years' experience on the job.

(iv) The Cable Systems: The St. Catharines, Thorold, Allenburg areas are served by Maclean-Hunter Cable TV Limited. Its President is F. J. Metcalf, its Program Manager, Eric Dusek. As of March 1976, it serviced 14,000 out of a potential of 32,000 homes. It telecasts six or seven hours a day (Monday through Friday) of live material on its community channel. Included in this material is one-half hour per week program "Civic Talk" which deals largely with matters arising out of the deliberations of the St. Catharines City Council.

Niagara Falls and Welland are served by Armstrong Communications Limited, R. C. Armstrong, President, R. Robson, Program Manager. As of March 1976 it serviced 8,500 of a potential 40,000 homes.

The system's community channel programming is less extensive than that of the St. Catharines' system but it does include regular programs by the Mayors of Niagara Falls, Welland and Port Colborne as well as the local M.P.P. Each program is usually screened twice during the week. The Maclean-Hunter and Armstrong systems can be linked to feed material from one system to the other.

Grimsby is served by Grimsby Cable TV Ltd., M. A. Johnson, President and R. Robins, Vice-President. The system currently services 2,200 homes of a potential market of 3,500 homes. No local programming is originated at the

moment although such a service may be available at some point in the future. The system at the moment cannot be linked to the other two in the Region although if Pay-TV should come to the Region, the Grimsby system could probably act as a relay between Hamilton and systems in the eastern part of the Region.

## B. Non-Regional Media

(i) The Daily Newspapers: Of the daily newspapers circulated in the Region but originated outside it, the Hamilton Spectator, and The Globe and Mail and The Star of Toronto are by far the most significant.

The Spectator, owned by the Southam Press, has a circulation of roughly 5,800 in the Region. It is the dominant daily paper in the municipalities of Grimsby and West Lincoln at the western end of the Region, and ranks second to The Standard in Lincoln. The paper maintains bureaux in Grimsby and St. Catharines, and a number of stringers throughout the western end of the Region. It holds no particular editorial policy for or against regional government. As one of its senior officials said "The Niagara Region does not bulk large in our scale of values".

The Globe and Mail, owned by F. P. Publications, is the dominant non-regional daily in the Region, its circulation of around 13,500 being nearly triple that of The Spectator or The Star. Over 33 per cent of that circulation is in the City of St. Catharines, with another 50 per cent going to Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Thorold. The remaining 17 per cent is spread throughout the other six municipalities. The paper maintains a number of stringers but no bureaux in the Region. The sensational or the unusual such as murders or attempts to go over the Falls in a barrel make the Globe, but the day-to-day matters of governing the Region are not regular fodder for its news mills. On occasion, reporters will be dispatched from Toronto to cover items considered of national interest.

Much the same is true of The Star. About half of its circulation of 5,400 is centred in Niagara Falls and Fort Erie with another 26 per cent in St. Catharines,



Welland and Port Colborne. The remainder is spread thinly throughout the other seven municipalities of the Region. The Star like The Globe is fed its news of the Region by stringers. The circulation of these three non-regional dailies is greater than any of the regional weeklies, but it is probably safe to say that the non-regional dailies are not bought for their coverage of regional affairs.

(ii) The Weekly Newspapers: No attempt has been made to assess any non-regional weekly papers.

(iii) The Radio Stations: At least eleven A.M. and six F.M. stations of non-regional Canadian origin are listened to in the Region. (See Appendix II for listing) Stations from Toronto, Hamilton, Richmond Hill and Ajax attract an audience. CHUM, Toronto, CBL, Toronto and CHML, Hamilton are the top three non-regional stations. None makes a regular practice of covering regional news, but coverage of special events (CHML and the St. Catharines Centennial) or particular issues considered of interest to a larger audience (urban boundaries) is made. As with the non-regional dailies, the non-regional radio stations could not be considered significant sources of news of the governing of the Region. Reference to American stations has been excluded for the same reason even though probably over 25 per cent of listening done in the Region is to American Stations.<sup>3</sup>

(iv) The Cable System: Non-regional cable systems are of no significance to the study. What is significant in terms of viewing patterns is the programming of the major television networks available from Toronto and Buffalo. With the exception of the local programming on the cable systems, no television programming is originated within the Region. This fact undoubtedly makes the Region the only area in the country with 350,000 people but without indigenous television. Virtually all television viewing is non-regional, the bulk of it to American channels. Of the eleven Canadian and eight American channels available "Off air" or via cable, (Appendix III provides a listing of the channels)

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3. The author wishes to express his gratitude to BBM Bureau of Measurement, Toronto for its assistance in corroborating information concerning listening patterns which had been gathered from a variety of disparate sources.

the three major American networks capture about two-thirds of the viewers' time.

## CHAPTER 2

### News by the Inch - A Quantitative Analysis

An analysis of the amount of coverage given regional and municipal politics in the print media has been made. Several words of caution should be entered about the analysis.

First of all, at the Commissioner's request, the analysis covers two set time periods, November-December 1974 and May-June 1976. The first period included the civic elections of 1974. The second period included the final public hearings of the Niagara Region Study Review Commission and the public hearings of the Planning and Development Committee of Regional Government in the matter of the urban boundaries of the Region. Each period is then in its own way atypical and likely to produce a greater amount of regional news than might other periods of time.

Secondly, the methodology used for the analysis may politely be described as crude or unsophisticated. A plain ordinary ruler was used to measure miles of column inches in eleven newspapers. Division of material into the various categories was made on a subjective assessment of the news content. It is recognized that there may be differences of opinion over whether a particular item is municipal, regional or provincial. Some items, especially editorials, might have been divided into all three categories as prudence dictated. Our prime concern was to maintain a consistency of categorization so that we would at least claim to be consistently wrong in our assessment of particular topics.

Finally, this particular analysis says nothing about the quality of coverage. That hazardous task comes later. For the moment, our concern is a purely quantitative one - to give some idea of the physical space given to various categories of subjects in the newspapers of the Region. Even then, too much faith must not be put in the statistics. In addition to the problem of categorization mentioned above, certain mathematical problems arose which required that "Guesstimates" be made here and there. As a result, the figures that follow must be taken for what they are - and treated accordingly - crude estimates of media coverage. They are only a beginning.



### The November-December, 1974 Election Period

During the five weeks of this study period, the three dailies contributed between two and four per cent of their total space to matters of municipal or regional concern or to the election itself. The Standard gave 4%, The Review gave 2% and The Tribune 3%. That coverage was made up of the following categories:

TABLE 2.1 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY CATEGORY:  
1974 ELECTION PERIOD - DAILIES

	Back- ground Articles	Report- age	Editor- ials	Letters to the Editor	Photos
Standard	16	65	6	2	11
Review	4	80	8	- *	8
Tribune	7	59	7	- *	27

\* less than 1%.

The statistics looked at in another way give us an impression of the emphasis of focus of each of the papers during the period.

Table 2.2 indicates the coverage given, first, to the home municipality of the paper concerned, then to the matters concerning the Region and the election of Regional Councillors and finally to items concerning other municipalities in the Region.

TABLE 2.2 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY MUNICIPALITY:  
1974 ELECTION PERIOD - DAILIES

	Local Municipality	Regional Municipality	Other Municipalities
Standard	53	18	29
Review	73	15	12
Tribune	74 <sup>1</sup>	5	21

1. Because of the bi-city nature of the Tribune, Port Colborne as well as Welland matters were included under "Local Municipality".

Items dealing with the election of mayors were categorized as "Local Municipality". It must be remembered in looking both at Tables 2.1 and 2.2 and at those that follow concerning the weekly papers that there were a great many acclamations in the election - a fact which is undoubtedly reflected in the figures. St. Catharines (for instance) had twelve people running for five seats on Regional Council whereas in Welland and Port Colborne all the Mayors and Regional Councillors were acclaimed. Table 2.3 is provided as a guide to the elections and to the interpretation of the tables. Elections for municipal councils and the School Boards were the order of the day.

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TABLE 2.3 ACCLAMATIONS IN THE 1974 REGIONAL COUNCIL ELECTION

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	<u>Mayor</u>	<u>Regional Councillors</u>
St. Catharines	Yes	No (5/12)
Niagara Falls	Yes	No (3/5)
Welland	Yes	Yes
Port Colborne	Yes	Yes
Thorold	Yes	Yes
Fort Erie	Yes	Yes
Grimsby	No (1/2)	No (1/2)
Niagara-on-the-Lake	No (1/4)	No (1/2)
Lincoln	No (1/2)	Yes
Pelham	Yes	No Councillors
Wainfleet	No (1/2)	No Councillors
West Lincoln	No (1/3)	No Councillors

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As suggested in Chapter One, it should also be remembered that The Standard traditionally covers a larger number of area municipalities than either of the other two dailies.

The cursory examination of the editorials of the period suggests that no great issues of regional concern were raised by any of the papers. Most of the issues raised during the campaign were of a local nature.

The seven week analysis of the weeklies reveals a greater percentage of total space going to municipal or regional

affairs, but less interest in the areas of the Region outside the local municipality. The amount of coverage to total space ranges from two per cent to eight per cent as follows:

Grimsby Independent	7%
Lincoln Post Express	7%
Niagara Advance	8%
West Lincoln Review	8%
Fort Erie Times-Review	8%
Herald of Pelham	5%
Port Colborne News	6%
Thorold News	2%

The breakdown by category of the coverage appears in Table 2.4.

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TABLE 2.4      PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY CATEGORY:  
1974 ELECTION PERIOD - WEEKLIES

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	Back- ground Articles	Report- age	Editor- ials	Letters to the Editor	Photos
Independent	8	49	26	2	15
Post Express	13	67	5	2	13
Advance	12	43	21	- *	24
Review	7	72	16	- *	5
Times-Review	14	51	15	3	17
Herald	- *	49	- *	23	28
Port Colborne News	8	77	7	- *	8
Thorold News	10	60	- *	- *	30

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\* less than 1%.

Table 2.5 indicates the coverage given, first to the local municipality of the paper concerned, then to matters concerning the Region and the election of Regional Councillors, where appropriate, and finally to items concerning other municipalities in the Region.



TABLE 2.5 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY MUNICIPALITY:  
1974 ELECTION PERIOD - WEEKLIES

	Local Municipality	Regional Municipality	Other Municipalities
Independent	98	2	-
Post Express	96	4	-
Advance	97	3	-
Review	98	2	-
Times-Review	99	1	-
Herald	99	1	-
Port Colborne News	95	5	-
Thorold News	97	3	-

The May-June 1976 "Hearings" Period

The dailies during the "hearings" period generally gave a larger amount of coverage to municipal and regional affairs than during the election period. The exception was The Standard the coverage in which dropped from four per cent to three per cent of total space while that of The Review and The Tribune each increased to four per cent of total space. That coverage was broken down by categories as shown in Table 2.6.

TABLE 2.6 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY CATEGORY:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Back- ground Articles	Report- age	Editor- ials	Letters to the Editor	Photos
Standard	8	82	6	3	1
Review	6	84	6	1	3
Tribune	4	82	9	2	3

The breakdown of the coverage looked at by municipal categories is given in Table 2.7.

TABLE 2.7 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY MUNICIPALITY:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Local Municipality	Regional Municipality <sup>1</sup>	Other Municipalities
Standard	33	32	35
Review	39	25	36
Tribune	40	38	22

1. All coverage of the Niagara Region Study Review Commission and the Urban Boundaries Hearings were placed in this category. Appendix IV lists the dates and places of the meetings. Appendix V lists the normal times of meetings of Regional and Area Municipality Councils and Standing Committees.

The weekly papers show a similar increase in the volume of municipal and regional coverage. Of their total space, the following percentages were given over to such coverage.

Grimsby Independent	16%
Lincoln Post Express	6%
Niagara Advance	6%
West Lincoln Review	14%
Fort Erie Times-Review	8%
Herald of Pelham	12%
Port Colborne News	8%
Thorold News	7%

The coverage in these weeklies breaks down by categories as shown in Table 2.8.

TABLE 2.8 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY CATEGORY:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - WEEKLIES

	Back- ground Articles	Report- age	Editor- ials	Letters to the Editor	Photos
Independent	7	79	6	3	5
Post Express	3	73	11	6	7
Advance	5	85	5	5	-
Review	1	82	10	5	2
Times-Review	3	75	8	-	14
Herald	6	71	-	2	21
Port Colborne News	2	93	5	-	-
Thorold News	-	92	8	-	-

The weeklies' coverage by Council is broken down as shown in Table 2.9.

TABLE 2,9 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF COVERAGE BY MUNICIPALITY:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - WEEKLIES

	Local Municipality	Regional Municipality	Other Municipalities
Independent	80	15	5
Post Express	63	32	5
Advance	75	13	12
Review	75	19	6
Times-Review	51	45	4
Herald	72	28	-
Port Colborne News	80	15	5
Thorold News	42	58	-



Distribution by category of the editorials, the editorial cartoons and the letters to the editor of the three dailies are given in Tables 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12. In the case of the Niagara Falls Review, the "Instant Editorials" have been treated as the letters to the editor. These are comments received daily from readers on a special telephone line.

TABLE 2.10 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIALS BY CATEGORY:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Municipal	Regional	Provincial	National	Inter- national	
Standard	25.3	11.7	19.8	29.7	13.5	(N=111)
Review	15.5	13.1	21.4	40.5	9.5	(N=84)
Tribune	37.6	16.9	10.4	23.4	11.7	(N=77)
Average	25.7	13.6	17.6	31.3	11.8	

TABLE 2.11 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIAL CARTOONS BY  
CATEGORY: 1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Municipal	Regional	Provincial	National	Inter- national	
Standard	4.5	-	4.5	52.2	38.8	(N=44)
Review	14.6	17.1	9.7	29.3	29.3	(N=41)
Tribune	-	-	-	60.0	40.0	(N=41)
Average	6.7	5.8	5.0	46.7	35.8	

TABLE 2.12 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR BY CATEGORY: 1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Municipal	Regional	Provincial	National	Inter-national
Standard	52.0	10.5	9.0	16.5	12.0 (N=200)
Review	51.1	9.5	9.7	21.2	4.5 (N=381)
Tribune	77.4	11.3	-	11.3	- (N=53)
Average	56.0	9.9	8.7	18.9	6.5

The editorials, editorial cartoons and letters to the editor dealing with regional government have been broken down by subject. The results of this analysis appear in Tables 2.13, 2.14 and 2.15. Again, the "Instant Editorials" have been considered as letters to the editor of the Review.

TABLE 2.13 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIALS DEALING WITH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT BY SUBJECT: 1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Engineer- ing Dept.	Health Unit/ Social Services	Police	Reg.Govt/ Archer Comm.	School Boards	Urban Bound- aries
Standard	--	15.4	15.4	23.1	46.1	-- (N=13)
Review	9.1	9.1	18.1	27.3	9.1	27.3 (N=11)
Tribune	15.4	15.4	23.1	23.1	23.0	-- (N=13)
Average	8.1	13.5	18.9	24.3	27.1	8.1 (N=37)

TABLE 2.14 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIAL CARTOONS  
DEALING WITH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT BY SUBJECT:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Engineer- ing Dept.	Health Unit/ Social Services	Unit/ Police	Reg.Govt/ Archer Comm.	School Boards	Urban Bound- aries
Standard	--	--	--	--	--	--
Review	42.8	--	--	28.6	--	28.6 (N=7)
Tribune	--	--	--	--	--	--

TABLE 2.15 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
DEALING WITH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT BY SUBJECT:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Engineer- ing Dept.	Health Unit/ Social Services	Unit/ Police	Reg.Govt/ Archer Comm.	School Boards	Urban Bound- aries
Standard	--	19.1	--	--	33.3	47.6 (N=21)
Review	11.1	33.3	19.5	11.1	11.1	13.9 (N=36)
Tribune	--	33.3	33.3	--	33.4	-- (N=6)
Average	6.4	28.6	14.3	6.3	20.6	23.8 (N=63)



The final analysis done of the daily newspapers is that in which the editorials (Table 2.16), editorial cartoons (Table 2.17) and letters to the editor (Table 2.18) concerning matters of regional government were examined in terms of their general outlook or tenor. They have been divided into three broad categories, "Pro/Supportive", "Neutral" and "Negative-Carping". Those placed in the first category are considered to be in favour of the concept of regional government or of the policies and practices of the Regional Municipality or its agencies. Those in the neutral category make a statement of sorts on a regional subject but cannot be considered to be clearly positive or negative. Those in the final category are clearly against the concept of regional government or the policies and practices of the Regional Municipality or its agencies and have something negative, critical or sarcastic to say. For instance, an editorial praising a citizens' meeting concerning a School Board budget is in the "negative" column because of the attitude taken to the School Board in question. The letters to the editors are perhaps the most difficult to classify. For instance, a number of letters supported the public health nurses in their stand against the Regional Health Unit. These have been placed in the "Negative" column as were letters critical of the urban boundary proposals or the plans to complete Highway 406. As has been our practice, the "Instant Editorials" in The Niagara Falls Review have been treated as letters to the editor.

A tabular type of analysis has not been done for the weeklies as the numbers of editorials, cartoons or letters to the editor was so small as to not permit a meaningful analysis in this form.

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TABLE 2.16      PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIALS BY TENOR:  
1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

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	Pro/Supportive	Neutral	Negative/Carping	
Standard	7.7	15.4	76.9	(N=13)
Review	36.3	9.1	54.6	(N=11)
Tribune	76.9	7.7	15.4	(N=13)
Average	40.5	10.8	48.7	(N=37)

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TABLE 2.17 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF EDITORIAL CARTOONS BY  
TENOR: 1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Pro/Supportive	Neutral	Negative/Carping
Standard	-	-	- (N=0)
Review	28.6	14.3	57.1 (N=7)
Tribune	-	-	- (N=0)

TABLE 2.18 PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
BY TENOR: 1976 HEARINGS PERIOD - DAILIES

	Pro/Supportive	Neutral	Negative/Carping
Standard	9.5	4.8	85.7 (N=21)
Review	11.1	16.7	72.2 (N=36)
Tribune	-	33.3	66.7 (N=6)
Average	9.5	14.3	76.2 (N=63)

### CHAPTER 3

#### A Job Well Done? A Qualitative Analysis

Attempts to evaluate the media qualitatively have been made in a variety of ways. In addition to personal observations, the questionnaire and interview techniques have been used. Questionnaires were sent to the twenty-nine members of Regional Council, twelve of whom are, of course, the mayors of the area municipalities.<sup>1</sup> Interviews were conducted with some forty-nine key individuals associated with the media and the councils of government in the Region.

#### A. Regional Media

##### (i) The Daily Newspapers:

An analysis of the responses from the Regional Councillors would suggest at first glance that the Councillors are happy with the coverage of regional affairs given by the print media. When asked if they thought that the newspapers are giving satisfactory coverage, 76 per cent agreed that they are while only 14 per cent felt that they are not. Ten per cent expressed no opinion.

When faced with the statement that the media generally give preference to municipal at the expense of regional affairs, 52 per cent of the Councillors disagreed and 34 per cent agreed with the statement. Fourteen per cent gave no reply. Somewhat paradoxically, 53 per cent of the Councillors agreed that none of the media outlets in the Region speaks from a regional as opposed to a municipal viewpoint, while 33 per cent disagreed with the proposition. Again, 14 per cent failed to respond.

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1. The mail questionnaire achieved a response rate of 70%, a remarkably high rate of return for a mail questionnaire. Nearly all of those who did not respond were interviewed, so that between the questionnaires and the interviews almost 100% coverage of the views of Regional Councillors was obtained. It should be noted, however, that the statistics quoted in this Chapter are based on the results of the questionnaire alone. See Appendix VI for a breakdown of the responses.



An even greater percentage of the Councillors felt that Regional Government cannot survive without a regional media voice. Sixty-two per cent agreed that such a voice is necessary, while 24 per cent felt that it is not. Again, the ubiquitous 14 per cent did not respond.

The quantitative analysis would seem to bear out some of the Councillors' concerns and not others. During the election period, the dailies, especially The Tribune, seemed to favour the local municipalities over the Region (Table 2.2). The Tribune's circumstance is probably explained by the absence of any elections for Regional Councillors. The general imbalance might in part be explained by the running of many more candidates for elective office at the municipal than at the regional level. The Standard and The Tribune appear to have given greater prominence than The Review to events in other municipalities. During the hearings period, the dominance of local news is still present, but markedly less so. As suggested earlier, the amount of regional coverage is probably artificially high because of the coverage given to the meetings of the Review Commission and the Planning Committee of the Regional Municipality. The coverage of other municipalities has increased noticeably, especially in the case of The Review (Table 2.7). This change is perhaps reflective of the paper's desire to re-establish itself in the Niagara-on-the-Lake area.

The distribution of coverage by categories between the two periods shows few startling changes. (Tables 2.1 and 2.6) The Standard and The Tribune appear to carry less material labelled "Background" while The Review has carried somewhat more "Background" material of late. Presumably the difference in the two papers with lesser coverage lies in the types of interviews, analyses and summaries which usually surround an election. Similarly, the amount of pre- and post-election photography was obviously not sustained in the hearings period.

The analysis of the editorials of the dailies (Table 2.10) indicates a considerable consistency amongst the three papers as to the percentage of editorials given over to regional matters. Only the category "International" has a smaller dispersion (4%) between the greatest and the least than does "Regional" (5.2%). Somewhat

similar consistency is shown in the fact that The Standard editorialized least about regional affairs while with The Review it was the second least popular topic after "International". Only with The Tribune did it rise to third place surpassing provincial and international affairs.

Comparisons in editorial cartoons are difficult because neither The Standard nor The Tribune carry much in the way of local cartoons. Most of them are syndicated and deal almost entirely with non-regional matters. It is a pity that a paper such as The Standard could not afford even a part-time cartoonist who could take advantage of some of the magnificent opportunities for cartooning of municipal or regional politicians. Note that municipal and regional cartoons make up nearly 32 per cent of The Review's supply (Table 2.11). These provide the reader with insights into the Region lacking in the other two papers.

The letters to the editor show a distinct municipal bias attracting 51 to 74 per cent of the letters in the three papers (Table 2.12). Regional matters attract a percentage not wildly dissimilar from the percentage of space given to the subject by each paper (9.5 to 11.3%). In terms of ranking amongst the categories, regional matters appeared to be of slightly greater interest to letter-writers than to editors. (The Standard: editorials - 5th out of 5, letters - 4th out of 5; The Review: editorials - 4th out of 5, letters - 4th out of 5; The Tribune: editorials - 3rd out of 5, letters - 2nd out of 5.)

The breakdown of editorials on Regional Government matters by subject (Table 2.13) would seem to suggest that editorial writers follow the prominent issues of the day. All of The Standard editorials dealt with the four then-current issues of the Regional Health Unit - Public Health Nurses controversy, the School Board budget and related issues, the Regional Police Commission Annual Report and the workings of the Niagara Region Study Review Commission or the general concept of regional government. Eighty-five per cent of The Tribune's editorials dealt with the same subjects, the regional engineering problems attracting the balance. Neither of these papers chose to editorialize on the urban boundaries issue, an issue to which The Review gave 27 per

cent of its editorial space at a time when the Planning Committee hearings were in full flight. Editorials on the subject did appear in The Standard during the summer, but outside our period of study.

Again, comparison in editorial cartoons is difficult as only The Review had any. There the cartoon's wit was aimed at three subjects, Regional Government/Archer Commission matters, engineering matters and the urban boundaries question (Table 2.14).

The letters to the editor on regional matters do not necessarily follow the editorials of the paper to which they are written. The Standard did not editorialize on the urban boundaries, but 48 per cent of the letters to The Standard dealt with that subject or related planning issues (Table 2.15). The Standard letter-writers ignored engineering matters as did the editorial writers. They chose to ignore the Police Commission Report and regional government affairs on which the paper had editorialized, limiting their concern instead to Health Unit and School Board matters in addition to the urban boundaries question. The Review's "Instant Editorials" attracted reaction on all six subject categories, the Health Unit topic headed the list, followed by Regional Police activities. The Tribune letter-writers were concerned about only three matters, the Health Unit, Regional Police activities and the School Board. Like their editors, they too were not interested in urban boundaries.

The personal interviews seemed to evoke a greater candor than the questionnaire to Regional Councillors. While some of the returned questionnaires did contain comments critical of the media, none was as critical of the dailies as the comments made in many of the interviews with non-media people when phrases such as "biased", "slanted", "parochial", and "ingenuous" were used to describe the quality of some reporting and "ill-informed", "uninspiring", and "petulant" to describe some of the editorials. Examples were given of articles written by reporters who had not attended the meetings allegedly reported upon, of misleading leaders, of incorrectly identified photographs, of contrived interviews which had actually never taken place, of articles cribbed from another reporter's story and of editorials incorrect in their facts, illogical in their arguments or cribbed from governmental documents.



While the questionnaires and the interviews suggest a general sense of satisfaction with the work being done by the papers, there is obvious dissatisfaction with some aspects of the media scene.

### Lack of a Regional Voice

One source of dissatisfaction lies in the fact that the dailies are geographically bound in their coverage and their reporting. As one editor said, as though speaking for all his colleagues, "We print only what is of interest to the readers in our circulation area." Or as another put it, "Our longest delivery run is only 15 miles". The Standard, The Review, The Tribune, and The Spectator each have their own sphere of influence in the Region and each tailors the news, reporting and editorials, to what each thinks is of interest to the readers of its sphere. The Region differs from most in the Province in that no one city dominates the Region nor does any one media outlet. (See the maps in Appendix VII showing the approximate sphere of influence of the dailies.)

The ramifications of this fact are many. Seldom does the reader receive a regional perspective on things. One municipality may legitimately fight against a sludge pond in its area, not realizing that from the point of view of the Region the area may be the best if not the only place for the pond to be located. Conversely, people in other parts of the Region may not even know that the people in the first area are even concerned about the pond. In terms of editorial writing and reporting, there appears to be a tendency to see only part of rather than the whole picture. Undoubtedly in this penchant for selectivity lies the basis for the charges of superficial, slanted or ill-informed coverage and editorials.

The media will undoubtedly respond that what has been stated is a fact of life. Each outlet has a particular audience to serve and a set of advertisers to satisfy. This is true. An attempt made a few years ago to form a regional newspaper failed. None but the very largest advertisers in St. Catharines are concerned about reaching people in Fort Erie or Port Colborne. Yet an increasing number of firms have multiple outlets in the Region and might seek region-wide exposure as is now given in publications as Good News. The daily newspapers might not welcome such a trend. The point does

remain, however, that 53 per cent of the Regional Councillors agreed that no media outlet speaks adequately for the Region or with a regional outlook. Sixty-two per cent agreed that Regional Government cannot function effectively without such a voice. Tables 2.16 and 2.17 would seem to bear this out with regard at least to The Standard and The Review. While no definitive statement can be made, one cannot help but wonder if the negative results of Table 2.18 (the letters to the editor) reflect the results of Tables 2.16 and 2.17. The Standard and The Review in particular may argue that their "Peninsula Parade" and "Metro" pages give a broader outlook on life and in part they do. The "Peninsula Parade" page in particular goes some way in helping the readers of The Standard understand what goes on in what was old Lincoln County. Little, however, is said about the southern half of the Region. The "Metro" page is concerned largely with the far eastern end of the Region, not the Region as a whole. One cannot help but wonder if the term "Metro" itself is a misnomer. "Metro" what? Why not "Regional Page"? Table 3.1 shows an analysis of the two pages, the "Peninsula Parade" page covering May-June 1976, the "Metro" page covering July 1976.

Recall the words of Dr. Mayo in his 1966 Report of the Niagara Region Local Government Review Commission which lead to the restructuring of the governing bodies of the Region and to the creation of the Regional Municipality of Niagara. In commenting on the objection that the Region is not a community, he said:

"This objection argues that there is no base in psychology or public opinion to support a regional government. In fact, however, the Region has many characteristics of a community. The journey to work knits the whole region together, so does the shared possession of Niagara Falls, and so will Brock University. The shared interests come from history, geography, and economics and social factors. Moreover, the very establishment of a new political unity will, we believe, generate a common interest, pride and loyalty, and so promote the sense of community that will in turn support the regional government." 2

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2. Niagara Region Local Government Review, H. B. Mayo, Chief Commissioner, Report of the Commission, (Toronto, 1966) p. 67.

TABLE 3.1 PERCENTAGE OF COVERAGE GIVEN TO AREA  
MUNICIPALITIES IN SELECTED "REGIONAL" PAGES

Area Municipality	Peninsula Parade	Metro
St. Catharines	1.40	10.64
Niagara Falls	4.80	7.51
Welland	4.75	-
Port Colborne	0.15	-
Thorold	14.00	3.95
Fort Erie	0.64	3.72
Grimsby	3.28	0.72
Lincoln	10.93	-
Niagara-on-the-Lake	15.73	16.73
Pelham	6.12	0.16
Wainfleet	-	-
West Lincoln	0.81	-
Regional Government	-	18.42
Instant Editorial	-	17.92
Advertising	23.85	-
Other (non-regional)	10.74	17.53
Title	2.80	2.70
Total	100.00	100.00

Increasingly, the isolation of the various parts of the Region is being broken down. The various means of communication, especially the telephone and the automobile are contributing to and enhancing this phenomenon. The expanded telephone areas, the increased amount of worker commuting,<sup>3</sup> the increased number of business enterprises with multiple outlets in the Region all contribute to its increasing homogeneity. The city-bound dailies, even with their extended coverage into their immediate hinterland would not seem to serve this trend.

3. See map in Appendix VIII showing commuting in the Region. About 23% of the Region's labour force commute from their municipality of residence into another municipality to their jobs. Note that these 1971 figures indicate that three municipalities have over 50% of their population involved in commuting and that another four are between 39% and 49%. Tentative 1974 figures suggest that the practice of inter-municipal commuting to the work place is increasing.



### Quality and Quantity of Staff

"We are not the world's best reporters - obviously not - or we would not be here. But most of us try to do the best job we can". This comment from one of the daily reporters interviewed seems to sum up the situation as accurately as any generalization could. The training, experience and length of service of the reporters varies considerably from outlet to outlet, but on the whole, most reporters seem to try to do his or her best, given his or her particular circumstances. Mind you, those circumstances may not be ideal nor may the standard of service be considered satisfactory by all observers.

Most reporters considered their papers understaffed, or themselves overworked. They all claimed the ability to do a better and more complete job with more time at their disposal. Most editors or publishers did not acknowledge an understaffing situation but expressed a willingness to remedy the situation if its existence could be proved - if it could be proved that major items of news were going unreported or that an increase in staff would benefit circulation. The matter of items going unreported appeared to be one of the greatest weaknesses of the media coverage in the eyes of Regional Councillors and the committee chairmen in particular.

### Matters Unreported

Comments from Regional Councillors and bureaucrats were ones of satisfaction about the fair and even nature of the media coverage. Limited but notable exceptions to the generalization, however, should be noted. Several comments were made about the superficiality of coverage and about the fact that many good stories were going partially or totally uncovered. The remarks concerning superficiality were most numerous with regard to radio. The comments were not couched in terms of a politician seeing opportunities for his own glorification slip by, but in terms of the media's obligation to inform the public of the machinations of government, especially in the financial realm. Possibly if reporters did have more time at their disposal, or were to concentrate fully on regional government instead of having to combine such coverage with widely unrelated matters, the situation would be better.

Some sympathy, of course, must go out to the reporters on the dailies. As the Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission on Local Government in England suggested with regard to the English situation, the press and the people may just be too confused and overwhelmed by too many meetings, councils and elections.<sup>4</sup> The reporters covering the Region have a great deal of sitting to do - through approximately 520 hours of meetings in 1975<sup>5</sup> - an average of 10 hours a week, over lunch hours many times. If they are to be well prepared for the meetings, they have an enormous amount of reading to do in order to cover the agenda, minutes and supporting documentation which comes from the Region before each meeting. In passing, it might be noted that one mayor said at a meeting of the Archer Commission that he had his staff go through the material and make notes on the things pertinent to his municipality, that because of the timing of the agenda and the amount of information he did not have time to do more before meetings.<sup>6</sup>

The reporters seem to be in much the same boat - although they do not have a staff to help them. It may be this time factor which contributes to the alleged failure to carry all good stories. In having to skim material for stories considered to be of interest to their local readers, the reporters by-pass things which they might see if they were looking at the total picture - quite literally a case of missing the forest for the trees. For example, it was suggested by a senior official of one area municipality that the handling of social services and policing in his municipality has altered radically since regionalization, and not for the better. All the media picked up were the superficial manifestations of the problems in terms of particular abuses of welfare regulations or of current criminal activities. No media outlet had stopped to look seriously at the nature of the regional arrangements, at the welfare and policing policies and, perhaps most importantly, at their implementation and administration.

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4. Report of the Royal Commission on Local Government in England, 1965-1969, Cmmd. 4040 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970) Vol. 1, p. 29.
  5. Based on information contained in letter from W. J. Dawson, Regional Clerk to R. Church, Department of Politics, Brock University, June 25, 1976.
  6. Minutes of the Niagara Region Study Review Commission meeting held on May 11, 1976, p. 10.

### Background Reporting

Such comments give rise to the question as to whether the press is doing enough background or feature writing on matters of regional or municipal affairs. One can scan any of the daily papers and get any number of syndicated columns of feature articles and opinion on provincial, national and international affairs. In some of the weeklies, one will find lengthy weekly reports from M.P.P.s and from local mayors. In the dailies and weeklies, one will find editorials criticizing the policies and budgets of Councils and School Boards but very little in the way of background or in-depth coverage. Tables 2.1 and 2.6 give an indication of the relative amount of space given over to background work - in most instances less than the amount of space given over to editorials. Granted, there are different styles of reporting. Some reporters include historical background and analytical comment in writing up a particular story; others report just the current facts of the particular story; still others select certain of the facts of the current story to be emphasized. Even the first of these does not completely fulfill the role of background or in-depth analysis envisaged here.<sup>7</sup> The relative amount of space given to backgrounding as opposed to editorials does not suggest an extravagant waste of space on the category.

It has been suggested by some that there should be more "investigative" reporting done by the regional media. If by the term "investigative" reporting it is meant the type of work done by Woodward and Bernstein of the Washington Post, there seems little likelihood of such reporting developing in the Region. No outlet, not even the Thomson papers, is in a position to provide adequate resources, in terms of reporters with sufficient free time available. More extensive coverage of the normal variety would seem to have first call on new resources. The personal relations amongst the reporters, editors, the politicians and the civil servants augur against it as well. Few want to risk rocking the boat - for a number of reasons fair or foul. The

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7. A prime example of what is envisaged can be found in The Grimsby Independent of June 30, 1976 in the articles on the regional tax dollar and education costs.



relatively small scale of the operations involved ("So a local alderman cheated on his expense statement to a conference recently. What is that beside Watergate?") deters many. It would seem that the muck-raking, investigative type of reporting is for the big cities, not the provincial towns. That outlook, however, should not remove from the dailies the responsibility of providing complete, balanced, in-depth coverage and analysis of the news of the Region.

(ii) The Weekly Newspapers:

Most of what has been said about the dailies applies to the weeklies, only with greater emphasis in certain circumstances.

Few direct comments about the weeklies were made in the responses to the questionnaire, but the quantitative analysis and the interviews provide some noteworthy insights. While the weeklies contribute a larger percentage of their total "newshole" to the coverage of regional and municipal politics (presumably because they carry less national and international material), they have been, with limited exception, far more parochially oriented than the dailies, Tables 2.5 and 2.9. (See Appendix IX). This was especially so during the elections period. Again, with exceptions such as The Independent, they seem to show little enthusiasm for background material. (Tables 2.4 and 2.8)

The limited number of staff preclude all the weeklies from covering Regional Council or its committees on any sort of regular basis. Reliance for what copy is published rests upon co-operative ventures such as those of The Standard papers, upon second-hand reports through municipal council meetings, on the benevolence of Regional Councillors or on the cribbing of the dailies. In some areas, it is even difficult to cover municipal politics adequately. Not much in the way of background work or investigative reporting is likely to come out of such situations. Even if the weeklies may be parochial in scope and perhaps a bit superficial or limited in their coverage, no one seems terribly upset. That seems to be the fate prescribed for them, accompanied of course, by the advertising which they carry.

In most weeklies a relatively good job has been done in reporting and editorial work with limited resources. The Independent's background articles deserve special mention. It is ironic to note, however, that the most thought-provoking writing about the Region should come from that quarter supposedly most oriented to a centre outside the Region.

(iii) The Radio Stations:

When asked if the radio stations were doing a satisfactory job, 80 per cent of the Councillors agreed that they were. Only ten per cent disagreed while another ten per cent gave no response. As in the case of the dailies and the weeklies, many more critical illustrations came out in the interviews than in the responses to the questionnaires. The general impression would seem to be that the stations were doing a relatively good job given their resources but that their coverage tended to be superficial. As one respondent put it, "The radio stations do not really give coverage. They give 30 second voice clips." Radio news is obviously more instant, truncated and sporadic and collected under somewhat difficult circumstances where a reporter corners a councillor after a meeting, puts a series of questions to him and then disappears to air his treasure. The politician may be caught off guard by the questions which, in his eyes, may not be the most pertinent arising out of the meeting. The answers are hurriedly formulated in a crowded room with others milling around eavesdropping or chatting to someone else. The circumstances certainly are not the best; the end product, from the point of view of the politician or the reporter, may not be the best. It will probably be the best possible from an unfortunate compromise.

Some of the stations attempt to give complete coverage to municipal politics. Three of the four attempt to give regular cover to Regional Council, but not to its committees. There is a lot of sitting for very little reward, given the current nature of radio news programming. The politicians might well consider the services provided to radio and the conditions under which radio people are expected to work. The stations might reconsider the format of their news programming with a view to providing more substantial, in-depth news and commentary at some point in time during the day or week.

As no quantitative analysis of the electronic media was undertaken, it is somewhat more difficult to judge their performance, especially on this matter of parochialness. All but CHSC-AM are capable technically of putting a signal into virtually all of the Region. CJRN claims to be a regional station. The impression gained from the interviews, however, is that all the stations tend to reflect the pattern of the papers, that is to emphasize the news of the home town area at the expense of regional affairs or other parts of the Region. Ironically, CJRN makes little effort to cover Regional Council. The four stations dominate the eastern end of the Region. CJRN is the most-listened to station in the Region, but its listeners are concentrated in the eastern end. Only CKTB has much of an audience outside its home base or outside the St. Catharines-Niagara Falls-Welland triangle. (See Table 3.2) Comparable figures are not available for the two FM stations.

(iv) The Cable Systems:

The cable systems seem to play a very small role in the political life of the Region at the moment. The interview programs conducted on the St. Catharines and Welland stations constitute the bulk of the political programming currently being done. No one knows how many viewers the cable community channels have, but there would seem to be nothing to loose in attempting to make use of them - even as an electronic notice board for the announcement of meetings. Might the meetings of councils be televised? St. Catharines was approached and declined the honour. Might the Region be interested? The cable systems do provide a means of reaching as wide an audience as possible in the Region with one consistent voice. If Grimsby could be brought in, the two ends of the Region would for the first time have a media link.



## B. Non-Regional Media

### (i) The Daily Newspapers:

As suggested in Chapter 1, three daily newspapers, The Hamilton Spectator and The Globe & Mail and The Star of Toronto have sizeable circulation in the Region. The Spectator is obviously the dominant daily paper in the western end of the Region but the Region is obviously not dominant in the priorities of The Spectator. Matters of Grimsby and environs are frequently reported upon but otherwise only matters of very special concern earn coverage. The urban boundaries issue, for instance, received extensive coverage from the paper's agriculture reporter and the editorial writers saw fit to take up a defence of the fruitlands before the papers of the Region commented on the subject. The Globe & Mail and The Star circulate more generally throughout the Region but again give even less coverage to the day-to-day political life of the Region. Reports of a torso found in the Niagara River, a decline in enrolment at Brock or a man attempting to walk the Niagara Gorge are more likely to find their way into The Globe than are matters of political concern in the Region. It should be noted that The Globe has, however, given front page coverage and editorial space to the urban boundaries issue. It would appear to see the fruitlands issue as one of national significance. All three papers, as is the wont of the trade, cut their columns to suit their clientele, be it reader or advertiser. None is going to make a significant contribution to a better understanding of the political life of the Region.

### (ii) The Weekly Newspapers:

As no non-regional weekly newspapers were included in the scope of the study, no evaluation is possible.

### (iii) The Radio Stations:

Even though stations located in Buffalo, Hamilton and Toronto attract about 64 per cent of the audience listening at any point in time during a week to radio in the

Regional Municipality, the stations involved generally carry little in the way of Region-oriented political news. And there would seem to be little incentive for them to do so. The Region is, by and large, a spill-over area for them. They are licensed to serve non-regional areas. Most regional advertisers are not likely to be attracted to them either because of the new Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission regulations concerning advertising on American stations or because of the fact that there would be a great deal of waste audience paid for at the higher rates of, for example, a Toronto station. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is that the fare provided will put the listener in a better frame of mind so that he or she will more eagerly and ably involve himself or herself in the governance of the Region!

(iv) The Cable Systems:

Non-regional cable systems are of no significance to this study. The remarks made above concerning radio apply equally to television. In light of the fact that regional viewing of American television channels is extremely high, some thought might be given to working out a modest regional presence on those channels, especially in the news area. One regional newspaper is trying to build up a readership on the other side of the border by reporting more news of that area. The American media might reciprocate by catering somewhat to an audience that is already there.

TABLE 3.2 PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION BY MUNICIPALITY OF TOTAL HOURS SPENT WEEKLY LISTENING TO THE FOUR AM RADIO STATIONS OF THE REGION

Station	St. Catharines	Niagara Falls	Welland	Rest of Region
CJRN (Niagara Falls)	22.2	63.6	7.9	6.3
CHSC (St. Catharines)	91.3	2.2	5.0	1.5
CKTB (St. Catharines)	64.8	7.4	-1	27.8
CHOW (Welland)	13.6	-1	82.9	3.5

<sup>1</sup> No measureable audience

### C. The Gatekeeper's Sources

In fairness to the gatekeepers, we should look at least briefly at the messages they receive. What efforts do regional and municipal governments make in contributing to the news that reaches the media gates?

First of all, the media are confronted with the thirteen councils. Chapter One gives information as to the policy of each outlet towards the coverage of meetings of councils and standing committees. Appendix V gives a listing of all the council and committee meetings, their frequency and time of meeting. On average, there are 28 council meetings and 68 standing committee meetings a month to be covered. Speaking in very broad terms, the three dailies all attempt to cover the Regional Council and all its committee meetings. The dailies also try to cover the municipal councils and committees, where permitted, in the municipalities of interest to their readers. The weeklies cover the councils and occasionally the committees of their area municipalities. Regional councils or committees are covered only on very special occasions. Three of the four radio stations cover Regional Council regularly and its committees on special occasions. The fourth (CJRN) covers Regional Council only on special occasions. All four cover municipal councils regularly and committees as resources and local policies permit.

The Region is probably the best of the local governing bodies in making material available to the media. Some reporters claimed that they got too much, at least more than they could usefully digest in the form of the Blue Book sent out before each meeting of Regional Council to all representatives of the media. The Book contains the agenda, the minutes of the previous meetings, the reports of committees, supporting materials, by-laws and index. It may run to over 100 pages in length. As well, formal notices of meetings are sent out concerning committee meetings.

Coverage of regional committees, especially by the radio stations is not very great. The meetings can be long, two to five hours, and that takes up a lot of staff time for what may be a 30 second voice clip. It was claimed by one outlet, however, that committee meetings were no longer covered because the meetings were changed or cancelled too frequently. In fairness to the Region, it should be noted that of the 144 regional committee meetings in 1975, only nine were rescheduled for reasons such as insufficient



business, lack of a quorum, conflict with other events, (funeral, conference, etc.) or expected presentations (e.g. delegations, staff reports) not ready. In all but the second case, all those media representatives who regularly attend meetings were notified of the change of plans.<sup>8</sup>

Generally speaking, the representatives of the media interviewed, some twenty in all, seemed happy with their relations with the Regional Municipality. They appreciated the relative openness of Regional Councillors and officials and the easy access enjoyed to both levels of news. Suggestions for improvement varied according to the source - from the dailies, for a more digestible ordering of the Blue Book; from the weeklies, for a synopsis of the Blue Book; from the radio stations, for short tapes dealing with matters of regional concern.

The relations with the area municipal councils are much more varied. In some instances, agenda and minutes of councils are available to the media, but their distribution of committee agenda or minutes is much more limited. The fact that many committees are not open to the media or public, or are open to the media only on the grounds that the contents of the meeting not be reported, obviously comes into play here. Appendix X attempts to summarize the situation with regard to the provision of information to the media and to the public.

Obviously, with regard to the area municipalities, the most pressing problem is the practice of closed committee meetings, a practice which a considerable number of them still insist on maintaining. The arguments in favour of the closed meetings are even to-day compelling to some. Proponents claim that closed meetings provide an opportunity for free and frank discussion and that no harm is done by the closed meetings in that matters discussed in them eventually come to the public council meetings. The arguments against the closed meetings are many and have been offered by the press of the Region in a variety of editorials or newspaper reports recently.<sup>9</sup> The major arguments run as

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8. Information provided by the Regional Clerk in letter to the author, August 13, 1976.

9. As examples: The St. Catharines Standard May 29, 1976 (editorial); June 14, 1976 (article); June 15, 1976 (editorial); Niagara Falls Review Dec. 19, 1975 (article); Welland Evening Tribune May 18, 1976 (article), May 19, 1976 (editorial), June 4, 1976 (editorial); West Lincoln Review, June 2, 1976 (editorial).

follows: the business being conducted is public business and therefore should be conducted in public; conducting public business in private raises suspicions as to the motives for closed-door discussion; even though items discussed in private eventually come to public council meetings, the public have a right to know before the council meeting the basis of the decisions taken in committee and to know if changes in stance have been made by councillors between committee and council; as information normally leaks out of closed-door meetings, sometimes inaccurately, why not have it come directly and accurately? The Region and some municipalities have opened their meetings and few people turn up anyway. If delegations are granted the right to speak to committees, should not the content of those discussions be public knowledge. To quote the Ontario Press Council, "It seems fundamental that in a democracy citizens should have the right to know, tempered only by genuine needs for confidentiality in limited spheres."<sup>10</sup> Overall, the burden of the argument would seem to fall in favour of the open meetings.

The media seemed content with its own relations with the Region, but considerable concern was expressed in a number of quarters about the Region's relations with the public. A comment heard from almost everywhere is that most people do not understand Regional Government and that the Region has done little to remedy the situation. The point was made by some that most people did not understand county government after 100 years, and therefore, the people should not be expected to understand the regional form after only six years of operation. Others argued, however, that simply because the Regional Municipality is so new, it should make a special and concerted effort to make itself better known.

The matter of the handling of public information at the regional level has a long and checkered history. The Regional Council has rejected a recommendation from one of its committees that it appoint an Information Officer.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Ontario Press Council, Third Annual Report (Ottawa, 1975) p. 2.

11. An examination of the history of the proposals for the appointment of an information officer for the Regional Municipality reminds one of the mountain that laboured mightily and produced the mouse. See: Anne Varangu, Information Distribution Policy of Regional Government (unpublished paper, Brock University, March, 1973) and a letter from the Regional Clerk to Wm. L. Archer, March 1, 1976, enclosing information on file regarding a public relations officer including "reports, letters, and briefs as well as excerpts from relative Council and Committee minutes". The terms "Public Relations Officer", "Public Information Officer" or "Regional Information Officer" have been used at different times over the past six years.



The recommendation of a consulting firm that such an officer be created has been ignored. The attempt to co-ordinate the information function within Regional Government has been very badly handled. Each department seems to act as its own public relations officer with the result that there appears to be a very uneven treatment of public relations and the risk is great of the innocent enquirer being given the run-around or left in partial ignorance.

In preparing this study, a request for the complete public information kit was put to the Clerk's Department and later, at the suggestion of the Clerk's Department to the Planning Department. Separate calls had to be made to the Social Services Division and the Homes for Aged. Appendix XI lists the contents of the packages received from the Clerk's Office and the Planning Department. One notes with interest that the Public Works Department produced a glossy annual report in 1975 but the Regional Municipality itself has never produced one. Only in 1976 were the financial statements published for the first time in the daily press. The Public Works Department produced a manual entitled "Regional Council and Departmental Data" July, 1976 which seemed to be a well-kept secret from the other departments, at least the Clerk's and Planning Departments. The Region appears to take little opportunity to publicize itself in the media, through various magazines circulated throughout the Region, through the school system, through regular speaking engagements or through letters to the editor. While it is recognized that a letter to the editor of a daily newspaper always carries inherent risks and usually gives the editor the last word, good or bad, editorials which appeared in the St. Catharines Standard and the Niagara Falls Review on June 23 and June 24, respectively entitled "Are All the Critics Wrong?" and "A House Divided", seemed to invite the Region to reply and state its case to the people. No reply was forthcoming from any quarter.

The Region has emergency numbers in each of the area municipalities, the headquarters switchboard operator is trained to direct calls to the appropriate departments, the chairman's office handles literally hundreds of enquiries a year (in fact, by Mr. Campbell's own admission almost a greater number than his staff can adequately handle). Yet the comment has been heard time and time again that people get the run around in trying to get information out of the Region. One radio station claimed that its open line shows



were full of enquiries about regional government and that the M.C. of the program had come to consider himself, if not an ombudsman, at least a direction finder in matters of regional concern.

The Region seems to have become aware recently that its public image is not all that it might be and is beginning to take some steps to improve that image. Public displays have been staged recently in some of the area shopping malls. Planning, Public Works, Social Services, the Homes for the Aged, and the Day Care Centres have pamphlets which describe their operations and consideration is being given to an information guide or pamphlet. These things are a beginning but a very modest one. The general impression of the public relations effort of the Regional Municipality is one of confusion and lack of co-ordination, a laissez-faire policy more suited perhaps to the more cozy, closely-knit days of county government than to the more complex, competitive and impersonal days of regional government.

The attitude of the Regional Councillors themselves towards regional government may in part explain the lax attitude toward the public information function. Clearly some Regional Councillors do not support the concept of regional government or believe that it has been tried and failed.<sup>12</sup> Others believe that it is their role to protect the interests of their particular municipality. A small majority, 52 per cent, agreed that the Region should have some sort of information officer. Thirty-four per cent disagreed with the idea and 14 per cent gave no reply. In the questionnaire, 62 per cent of Councillors feel that they and their colleagues approach their work from a regional point of view, yet over 76 per cent feel that their fellow Councillors do not work as hard as they might at explaining the work of regional government to the people. Table 3.3 would suggest that their reading and listening habits as derived from the questionnaire concentrate on the municipal level. There seems to be a general feeling amongst Councillors, especially from the smaller municipalities, that no form of public relations work is necessary because they as individuals can handle relations with the local press and enquiries from individuals. Evidence would suggest, however, that such an approach has its weaknesses, especially in the larger centres.

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12. See H. Payne, "Regional Government, Success or Failure?" Civic, February, 1976, p. 35. In response to his questionnaire, 40 per cent of the regional politicians said that they would prefer to return to the pre-regional municipalities.

All in all, the activities of the governing bodies of the Region may be helping to confuse the issues. The area municipalities rightly speak with a municipal viewpoint. The media reflect this and the people understand it. The Region speaks with a mixed voice, partially regional, partially municipal. The media reflect this in part, but always seeking to emphasize what is considered to be of interest to the readers or listeners of the particular outlet. So there is no clear presentation of what might be called a regional outlook to the people of the Region. As one weekly editor said "It is no wonder the people don't like regional government. All they hear about it is what comes back from the regional representatives to local council. And that is not good news." Perhaps it is time the Region took steps to ensure that its viewpoint is more forcefully put and hopefully better understood. The findings of Professor Price of the University of Windsor seem appropriate here. "The new policies which have been created at the regional level have to develop visibility to the citizen, to the extent that he begins to focus his political interactions at that level." <sup>13</sup>

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TABLE 3.3      READING AND LISTENING HABITS OF REGIONAL COUNCILLORS (expressed as a percentage of total responses)

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Read or Listen to	Daily Newspapers	Radio Stations
4 outlets	Not applicable	6.7
3 outlets	17.6	0.0
2 outlets	29.4	60.0 *
1 outlet	53.0	33.3

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\* nearly 50 per cent of this group live in St. Catharines and listen to both St. Catharines stations.

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13. Trevor Price, "The Political Viability of Ontario's Reformed Structures of Local Government" a paper prepared for the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Laval University, Quebec City, May 30, 1976, p. 19.





## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Conclusions

The most notable feature of the media scene in the Region is the local or parochial nature of the existing media outlets. That comment is not made as a criticism of the outlets in question, but merely as a statement of fact. The three dailies and four radio stations each serve primarily the municipalities in which they live at the eastern end of the Region. The weeklies serve their particular municipalities, east or west. The western end of the Region depends largely on media sources, print or electronic, originated outside the Region. The cable systems carry little political programming. The non-regional media carry little regional news or analysis. The net effect is that there is no outlet to speak from regional viewpoint or to relate effectively one part of the Region to another. Under these circumstances, it would seem difficult for a sense of community or regional identity to develop.

Antagonists of the regional concept will respond that a regional identity is not necessary or that a regional viewpoint need not necessarily be conveyed from one outlet. Canada, they will say, has no such single outlet, print or electronic, so why should the Region? The comment has some merit, but is overly simplistic. It overlooks the fact that the Canadian analogy is perhaps an unfortunate one - in light of the apparently fragile nature of the beast, with eastern and western separatists crying for the breakup of the federation. It overlooks the fact that someone in the Federal Government seems to think a sense of Canadian identity is important - important enough to spend millions of dollars to foster a sense of identity and to eliminate historic words, styles and symbols considered divisive and inimical to a true Canadian identity. It overlooks the fact that Canada does have at least one newspaper that claims to be a national paper, that it is physically available in the major centres across the country on the day of publication and that it carries, at least once a week, a page of feature articles that let its readers know what is of concern in other parts of this broad land each week. It overlooks the fact that we have

national magazines which are read by millions from coast to coast, one of which was so popular that it had to be killed in order to allow a more "true north" variety to be strong and free. It overlooks the simple sociological fact that a governing body, if it is to continue to exist and to function effectively, must have at least the tacit support of the people it governs. The media play a significant role in developing and maintaining that sense of legitimacy and support.

In a less complex age, political support could rest more simply on personal relationships. Like it or not, as society has become more complex and less personal, the media have come to play a far more important role in maintaining or destroying this societal support mechanism. If one assumes the desirability of effective regional government, it therefore seems worthwhile noting that the present form of government appears to have little solid base of support in the existing media set-up and suggesting, as will be done shortly, that means be found to overcome this deficiency.

To repeat, the absence of a regional voice is not necessarily a criticism of the existing media outlets, but a statement of what is basically an economic fact of life. Each of the dailies has its own sphere of influence and is not likely to try to drive out the other two. Would The Standard want to take on the Thomson chain? Would the Thomson chain want to appear to be using its economic might to establish a monopoly amongst the dailies in the Region? None of the papers could expand to a regional base without great, probably too great, economic and/or political cost. As well, each operates in a highly competitive market - competitive in the sense of the availability of not only other newspapers, but also of radio and television which bring information and entertainment to the residents of the Region. If they are to retain their existing base of support, the newspapers must continue to provide a service both to the advertiser and the reader which is not easily duplicated by one of the competing media. They must provide a local service. A few years ago, an attempt was made to establish a regional newspaper. The attempt was not a success. The economics of advertising, production and distribution seemed to be against it. A regional daily is not likely to appear in the foreseeable future.

Most of the comments made above apply with equal force to the weekly newspapers. Each is even more local in its base

of operations and finance and no one of them is likely to spring to regional prominence in years to come. Whether a new regional weekly could be established is a matter for conjecture. Present indications would seem to argue against it.

The radio stations seem to provide the greatest hope for all-regional coverage. At least they are not faced with the problem of expensive distribution. All but CHSC-AM produce a signal which with varying degrees of quality can be heard in almost all parts of the Region. Yet they too are tied to their local base. Ironically, the station that claims to be the most listened-to station in the Region is one which, by its own admission, is the least interested in matters political - in politics generally and in the affairs of the Region in particular.

By and large, the staff of the media try to do a good job under difficult circumstances. The radio stations and weeklies are particularly badly understaffed in terms of doing a meaningful job of consistent and regular coverage. In all media, there is little background or in-depth reporting; there is little investigative reporting and there is not likely to be a great deal. There seems to be relatively little co-operation or desire for co-operation amongst the media in order to facilitate the dissemination of news about the Region.

The media do definitely fulfill the gatekeeper role and in so doing provide a filter to the news concerning the governance of the Region. Certainly not all the news available gets through the gates. Time, space and inclination do not allow it. In the process, much of the regional viewpoint of the news is lost to the cause of the local municipality. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say that the media do not carry enough regional news. What is enough? News of the region is only one of many aspects of a multi-faceted world that must be fitted in a relatively short period of time into a relatively fixed amount of space. It would seem from most interviews that in competition for space, news with a regional viewpoint is likely to suffer in favour of news with a municipal outlook.

If the aforementioned conclusion is valid, the responsibility for it should not necessarily be put solely on the shoulders of the media. The Region Council and Councillors must accept some responsibility. Many of the Councillors have



been parochial and have tended to act with a less than regional outlook and the efforts of the Regional Municipality in projecting its own image have been at best half-hearted and uncoordinated.

The limited horizons of the regional media would seem to be their greatest weakness. Judging from the questionnaires, qualitative analysis and the personal interviews, it would appear that they have, on balance, performed reasonably well in their information function, somewhat less well in their education function.

The matter of accuracy, fairness, balance and objectivity are much more difficult to judge. The examples of what were considered to be inaccurate and less-than-objective reporting, unfair editorials and unbalanced leaders were produced in several interviews. They do exist, but it is difficult to suggest that any of them exist as the result of purposeful plots on the part of reporters, editors or publishers. Not even the suspicion of some people's minds that chain newspapers necessarily think or act alike can be borne out. To the extent that the weaknesses exist (and in light of the volume of material encompassed, the extent seems relatively small), they would seem to be more a function of individual human weakness - such matters as tiredness, irritableness, boredom, the attraction of the familiar and of the safe, the tendency to error under pressure, occasionally peevishness but seldom malice or outright prejudice. They must, in part, be due too to the nature of the journalist's job and to the nature of regional politics.

There seems to be a certain credibility gap in some of the responses in both the questionnaires and the interviews. Investigation suggested that this is due in part to the working out of the old cliché that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The prejudice alleged by some exists perhaps more in the eye of the respondent than in fact. The journalist obviously cannot please all of the people all of the time. Another phenomenon revealed itself, however, in the opposite direction when credibility appeared to be strained because the respondent who is loathe to criticize the media publicly spoke out privately. Individual politicians probably need the media more than the media need the individual politicians. Some are obviously wary of attacking the media openly to claim misquotes, bias or inaccuracy for fear of being cut off by the reporter in question. One of the problems of a one newspaper town! If such politicians would speak up publicly more often, the alleged weaknesses might be diminished.

The responsibility of covering the regional School Boards and the Niagara Regional Police Force deserves special comment in that each seems to give rise to particular problems. The Deputy Chief of Operations of the Niagara Regional Police Force reported in the 1975 Annual Report of the Force to the Board of Police Commissioners that the Police Force felt that the relationship between the Press and the Police in 1975 had improved, and that the Press should be commended for their endeavour to co-operate with the Police. Interviews with various media representatives would not seem to bear out this optimistic analysis of the relationship. Similarly, while some School Boards reported very positively on their relations with the media, others expressed deep concern about the nature of the coverage received and the on-going harrassment to which they were subjected in spite of efforts to amend or explain matters complained of by the media. More openness, honesty and trust would appear to be in order on all sides in order to create more meaningful, co-operative and mutually beneficial relationships.

The reporter's job is made more difficult by the nature of regional politics. As has been suggested in several places,<sup>1</sup> the absence of formal partisan politics at the municipal and regional levels makes the process of policy formulation much more diffuse and difficult to fathom. In many respects, the politics of the Region at the moment remind one somewhat of those of late 18th or early 19th century Britain before the advent of the present disciplined political party. The policy-making process was one of shifting majorities, with majorities being formed at one time around a particular issue and around another issue or personality at another time, but with different people in each majority. The leadership was also diffuse with the monarch playing more the role of the honest broker than leader - honest broker among the baronial representatives of the diverse parts of the realm, each with his differing outlook. Slowly, the loose groupings known as the Whigs and the Tories evolved into the Liberal and Conservative Parties. Policy-making and the consequent attachment of responsibility became more comprehensible and clear cut. The life of the reporter would appear to be much simpler if a party system did

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1. For instance, see Price, *op. cit.*, p. 4. "Regional governments lacking the benefits of a party system and the auxilliary help which Parliament and provincial legislatures can summon, are facing difficult problems."

develop at the regional level especially. Such a system need not necessarily be a reflection of the national or provincial parties. It is the development of a party system and the more precise attachment of responsibility flowing therefrom that is important. The dispersion of the policy-making process and the unco-ordinated nature of the political system compound the problem of the "gatekeepers" and enhance the danger of the reflections which they cast being uncertain.

No effort has been made to rank the various outlets. Generalizations of all sorts were made about both the print media and the electronic media in the questionnaires and the interviews. The daily newspapers in particular were praised for some aspects of their work and damned for others. The weeklies and the radio stations evoked fewer strong comments of praise or condemnation. A box score seemed impossible to keep. If one generalization could possibly cover the whole scene, it might be that small is beautiful, remembering that the larger the enterprise, the larger the target provided.

Returning to the introductory quotations, it can be said that the media have definitely performed a gatekeeper role, and in part, have provided an uncertain mirror of the society they reflect. Yet to the extent that the Region and the area municipalities have had their own shortcomings, the mirror has provided all too certain a reflection.



## B. Recommendations

First, and foremost, the media should continue to strive to provide fair, objective and unbiased reporting of the political events of the Region. They must never forget their functions of informing, educating and entertaining the people and must keep an equitable balance amongst these functions.

The media, especially the radio, the weeklies and cable, must strive to give more effective treatment of the affairs of the Regional Municipality, both in terms of coverage (information) and background reporting (education).

The basic noticeboard function for regional and municipal meetings could be enhanced in most papers by following, for instance, the example of The Standard's "When They Meet" column. An effort should be made to place it in a regular spot in the paper and to keep it as accurate and up to date as possible. Assuming it would normally appear on Mondays, arrangements should be made for amendments to it during the week in case new meetings are called. Greater use should also be made of the noticeboard facilities in the cable community channels.

With the meetings then announced, more background writing should be done ahead of the meeting to inform the people of the significant issue anticipated to arise at the forthcoming meeting. The backgrounding was done effectively by some papers prior to the public meetings of the Review Commission and the Planning and Development Committee. It is useful to have some background material included in the actual coverage of the meeting but it is obviously more useful from the public's point of view to know what is going to happen at the meeting before one is faced with a fait accompli.

As part of general education function, the weeklies in particular might carry reports from the Regional Councillors of their area. Some papers already carry comments from their M.P.P.s and Mayors. Why not a Regional Councillor's comment or report?

In matters of staffing, it is not likely that any of the regional media are going to have staff of international quality or in such quantities as to permit investigative reporting of a national or international stature. The present situation will likely continue, with a dedicated group of reporters with mixed talents and experience,

most of whom will continue to try to do a good job. Inevitably, some will fall short of the mark and claims of misquoting, misrepresentation and missed stories will continue. The media might, as do some of the metropolitan dailies, consider rotating their reporters after five to seven years on a particular beat.

It is to be hoped, however, that the media might get somewhat better mileage out of their human resources by trying a little co-operation amongst themselves. Why, for instance, could not the dailies, or even some of the weeklies which claimed to have difficulty in getting enough copy, reprint or modify for their own use in-depth stories such as those carried in the Grimsby Independent in June? They would have as much if not more relevance to the readers of the Region than the aimless wire service stories collected from all parts of the world to be used as filler around all the advertisements on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Of course, to work up or include such material would take the will and determination on the part of the regional papers that the regional news was more newsworthy than some of the gripping stories included now.<sup>2</sup>

More material of a regional as opposed to a municipal basis could be available to the dailies or the weeklies if they would pool their resources to support a regional bureau at Regional Headquarters as they support a bureau at Queen's Park. Of course, coverage of regional affairs from a municipal point of view would continue, but with at least one reporter in the Region free to look at things from a regional point of view and perhaps some time to do a bit more in-depth reporting on matters of regional concern. Then, the three or eleven or how many newspapers were supporting the service could provide a consistent, region-oriented presentation to their readers just as the dailies now carry provincially-oriented syndicated material from Queen's Park. The same bureau could be used to provide taped material for the radio stations. The Region might co-operate by providing better media facilities, especially for interviewing and taping.

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2. From The St. Catharines Standard of September 8, 1976, some samples. "A Newcomer Discovers its Easy to Get Lost in Moscow" (Christian Science Monitor News Service), "Crime Flashback", "Millionaire Gets Kicks Out of Throwing Batting Practice with Boston Red Sox", "School Means Police Ready" (A.P.), "Their Entrance Is a Shocker but the Music Is Gentle Rock" (A.P.), "Jail Fast Fails to Spread" (A.P.), "The Head Important to Clown" (A.P.), "Submerged Self-Images Surface on the Bumpers" (A.P.), "Cornny Shows, Hee-haw and Humor, Thats Opryland, U.S.A." (C.S.M.N.S.), "Art's Worst Enemies in Brazil Either Two legged or Six legged [sic]" (A.P.).



Recognizing that a first step has been taken in this direction, I would suggest that a better effort be made to relate one part of the Region to another. The papers carry several pages each Saturday of world-wide travel attractions. Why not a few stories about those parts of the Region not normally covered in the regular daily coverage? The radio stations could prepare tapes for each other of a regional nature. Someone might even go so far as to produce a supplement of regional news and features to be distributed perhaps monthly with the Saturday papers. Good News already has a regional focus. Alive and Well could perhaps develop one.

The non-regional media could with benefit increase their coverage of regional events. CHCH-TV Hamilton is licensed to serve the Region, but from all reports does very little. Before its licence renewal comes up, it might cover something other than the Grape Festival Parade. The Globe & Mail circulates through a number of Ontario areas where regional governments are in operation. It could well introduce into its Saturday edition a page dealing with the various Ontario regional governments comparable to its provincial and international pages. The Hamilton Spectator could usefully create a regional page concentrating for greater accessibility the news of Regional Niagara, separately or in conjunction with the other regions into which the paper penetrates. Out-of-region-media of the sort just mentioned might help support a Regional News Bureau, as might one or more of the Buffalo TV stations. When one stops to note that the top three television stations in the Region are of Buffalo origin and that about 60 per cent of viewing done in the Region is done on those three channels, it seems worth considering them as an outlet for news.

Such a step is just what the Regional Municipality itself might do as part of a campaign to improve its image. But first and foremost, it should make a concerted effort to improve its public relations efforts. Logically, the first step would seem to be the appointment of someone with clear and firm responsibility to co-ordinate activities. If a Chief Administrative Officer is appointed the responsibilities might in the first instance fall within his purview. Failing the appointment of a Chief Administrative Officer, or even a few years hence were such an appointment made, the appointment of a Communications Co-ordinator would seem to be in order.



The Region, with greater internal co-ordination, could perform a number of functions which in the long run should help make its job and that of the media more effective. For instance, the Co-ordinator could publish annual reports of regional activities. If one department does it, why not the whole organization in order to let the people know what is being done with their tax dollars?

The Co-ordinator could also arrange for the taping of the meetings of Regional Council and its Committees, with the tapes to be kept for six months before being recycled. The publication of a printed report in the form of the federal or provincial Hansard would undoubtedly be expensive beyond merit, but the tapes would be relatively inexpensive yet would allow the media, especially the electronic, and the interested public access to who said what at meetings at least during the specified time period. Hopefully a greater sense of responsibility and accuracy would be instilled in all concerned.

The Co-ordinator could also standardize the Region's newspaper clipping service and ensure that a complete up-to-date set of clippings is available to be circulated amongst the Regional Councillors and the regional bureaucracy. Eventually, copies could be preserved for use by researchers and the interested public. At the moment, no one repository in the Region retains the papers of the Region for more than six months. The Brock University Library might consider its responsibility to the Region in this regard. In the meantime, such a clipping service would provide a record, in one spot, of what has been said in and about the Region over the years.

The Co-ordinator could also organize a Speaker's Bureau so that requests for speakers about the Region from schools, service clubs and numerous other organizations could be conducted on a more regularized basis than at the moment. And the Bureau might even shuttle Councillors around a bit, so the people of Fort Erie might gain something of the point of view of a Councillor from Grimsby.

Greater advantages could also be taken of the opportunities to publicize the Region and its activities in the many journals that now circulate through parts or all of the Region. T.V. Facts, Good News or Alive and Well come to mind as examples. There are dozens of others of which advantage could be taken if only someone had the authority and the time to plan appropriate material or to respond to requests. At the same time, synopses or highlights of the

Blue Book could be made to assist all, especially the weeklies and the radio stations, to make better use of it.

The Co-ordinator could also assist in the development of relations with the regional cable T.V. companies. While at the moment, the MacLean-Hunter and Armstrong Cable companies cover only St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, Thorold and Port Robinson, they do provide the largest single co-ordinated, consistent approach to the public in the Region. When the Grimsby Cable system is large enough, it might be added to the grid. From all reports, the cable companies would be happy to have more regional and municipal material; it seems a pity that the opportunity is not more effectively utilized.

The Co-ordinator could oversee the posting in all public libraries and municipal buildings of the Region the agenda and minutes of the Regional Council and Committees as well as of the appropriate municipal councils and committees.

The Co-ordinator could also oversee an education committee composed of Councillors and lay people to work with the school systems, community groups and the public generally with a view to making better known in the schools and in the community at large the problems of governing the Region and the institutions designed to meet those problems.

The daily newspapers have in the past and may well in the future complain that an effort on the part of the Regional Municipality to strengthen its own information and education functions would constitute an interference with the free flow of ideas and with their responsibilities for reporting the news of the Region. The suggestions made concerning the greater co-ordination of regional activities are intended in no way to interfere with this process. If anything it is hoped that they would enhance it. The suggestions are not intended to interpose anyone between the daily press and the regional politicians or officials. They are not intended to suggest or in any way support the production of "managed news". In fact, it would be a dereliction of duty on the part of reporters if they allowed their present standard of performance to slip to "handout news", a form of news which it is claimed by some dominates the national scene.<sup>3</sup> The suggestions are directed at the problem of helping those with fewer resources than the dailies gain more access to regional news. They are also directed at the fact that the dailies, important as they are in their gatekeeper function, are not in the 20th century the only source of news and that

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3. Pierre Burton, "For Immediate Release" Content (#68) November, 1976, pp.6-10.



the Region has a responsibility to project itself in as many directions as it can.<sup>4</sup> In the long run its value and effectiveness will be judged by its deeds. In the short run, its deeds must be made well and widely known.

Last but not least, it is suggested that those municipalities which still retain closed meetings amend their policies to have, as a general rule, all meetings open to the press and public. Public business should be conducted so the public can observe and evaluate the proceedings. Exceptions, of course, could be permitted for the discussion of matters dealing with property, personnel and litigation. The list of exemptions should not be allowed to grow nor used as a cover for discussing other subjects in camera. Conversely, the media representatives must recognize that if they give to an undertaking not to report a matter discussed at a particular meeting, they must respect that undertaking. It would be better to stay away than to violate the trust. Trust is hard to earn; it is very easily destroyed. An example of openness has been set by the Regional Municipality. The area municipalities would do well to follow the lead, noting, of course, that no great calamity befell the Region when it opened its meetings.

The opening of committee meetings would pay homage to the principle of public business being conducted in a public forum. In theory, the openness should benefit the public. In practice, it may not if the media do not rise to the occasion by providing additional personnel to cover the meetings. At the moment, committee meetings are the least well and least consistently covered events of the regional political scene. The media have clamoured for open meetings. It is to be hoped that they will accept the challenge which they have in part created for themselves!

Those who prefer the cosiness of closed meetings may well argue that the public do not turn out in great numbers to those meetings which are open. This is true in most instances. But the recourse to such a line of reasoning in defence of closed meetings begs the question of the principle involved. The opening of the meetings at least indicates recognition on the part of the council concerned that the people have a right to know how their business is being conducted. In an era when the level of morality of politicians has been under question almost universally, the desire to deny the principle of openness does seem somewhat unfortunate. One would expect

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4. Canada, Task Force on Government Information, To Know and Be Known, Vol. II (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1968), p. 117. The Task Force suggests that the media are the smallest consumers of federal government information.



that politicians would want to be one with Caesar's wife - above suspicion.<sup>5</sup>

Limited public response to open meetings may be due partially to the limited publicity given to the timing of the meetings. Here again, we come back to our main theme, to the role of the media, and of the governing councils of the Region, in providing the people of the Region with news and information about the political life of the Region. The democratic process is a complex and fragile one. Its success rests largely the free flow of ideas and information to the public who in turn must make the ultimate choice amongst competing potential servants and sets of policies. The politician must formulate those alternatives clearly, the media must reflect and explicate them effectively. Then the people can decide. With anything less, the system is defective. The democratic choice becomes Hobson's choice.

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5. While the arguments outlined here have been directed primarily toward the practices of some of the area municipalities, they could also be applied to certain aspects of the work of the Niagara Regional Board of Commissioners of Police and the regional school boards.



APPENDIX IMedia Outlets Originated in the RegionNewspapers - Daily

The St. Catharines Standard  
17-21 Queen Street  
St. Catharines, Ont. L2R 5G5  
684-7251

The Niagara Falls Review  
4801 Valley Way  
Niagara Falls, Ont. L2E 1W4  
358-5711

The Welland Evening Tribune  
228 Main Street East  
Welland, Ont. L3B 3W8  
732-2411

Newspapers - WeekliesThe Standard Papers

The Grimsby Independent  
19 Adelaide St. East  
Grimsby, Ont. L3M 1X2  
945-9264

The Lincoln Post Express  
51 Central Street  
Beamsville, Ont. L0R 1B0  
563-8231

The Niagara Advance  
42 Queen Street  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.  
L0S 1J0  
468-3283

The West Lincoln Review  
Smithville, Ont. L0R 2A0  
957-3315

Newspapers - WeekliesOthers

The Herald  
7 Pelham Street South  
Fonthill, Ont. L0S 1E0  
892-6022

The Port Colborne News  
56 Charlotte Street  
Port Colborne, Ont. L3K 3C8  
735-6448

The Thorold News  
37 Ormond Street North  
Thorold, Ont. L2V 1Y3  
227-1141

The Times-Review  
240 Jarvis Street  
Fort Erie, Ont. L2A 2S5  
871-3100



Cable Television Systems

Maclean-Hunter Cable TV Ltd,  
45 Wright Street  
St. Catharines, Ont.  
L2P 3K6  
688-2555

Armstrong Communications Ltd.  
99 Lincoln Street, Box 159,  
Welland, Ont. L3B 5P2  
735-3331

Grimsby Cable TV Ltd.,  
2 Kingsway Crescent  
Grimsby, Ont. L3M 3E5  
945-4932

Radio Stations

CKTB, AM & FM  
12 Yates Street  
St. Catharines, Ont. L2R 6X7  
684-1174

CHSC, AM & FM  
26 Queenston Street  
St. Catharines, Ont. L2R 7C7  
682-6691

CJRN  
4668 St. Clair St.,  
Niagara Falls, Ont. L2E 6X7

CHOW  
Regional Road 23  
Welland, Ont. L3B 3N5  
732-4433

APPENDIX IINon-regional Canadian Radio Stations which Attract a Measurable Audience in the RegionA.M.

CBL - Toronto  
 CFGM - Toronto/Richmond Hill  
 CFRB - Toronto  
 CFTR - Toronto  
 CHAM - Hamilton  
 CHML - Hamilton  
 CHOO - Ajax  
 CHUM - Toronto  
 CJBC - Toronto  
 CKEY - Toronto  
 CKOC - Hamilton

F.M.

CBL-FM - Toronto  
 CHFI-FM - Toronto  
 CHUM-FM - Toronto  
 CKDS-FM - Hamilton  
 CKFM-FM - Toronto  
 CKQS-FM - Oshawa

APPENDIX IIITelevision Stations Available in the Niagara RegionCanadian

3 - CKVR Barrie \*\*  
 5 - CBLT Toronto  
 6 - CKGN Paris  
 9 - CFTO Toronto  
 11 - CHCH Hamilton  
 13 - CKCO Kitchener \*\*  
 19 - OECA Toronto \*  
 25 - CBLFT Toronto \*  
 79 - CITY Toronto \*\*  
 8 or 12 - Community Channel \*  
 16 - Newscable \*\*

American

2 - WGR Buffalo  
 4 - WBEN Buffalo  
 7 - WKBW Buffalo  
 12 - WICU Erie \*\*  
 17 - WNED Buffalo \*  
 24 - WJET Erie \*\*  
 29 - WUTU Buffalo \*  
 35 - WSEE Erie \*\*

\* - available on cable only

\*\* - available only with cable converter

APPENDIX IV

Public Hearings of the Niagara Region Study Review Commission,  
May-June 1976.

May 11 - Niagara Falls  
May 12 - Port Colborne  
May 15 - Wainfleet  
May 17 - Welland  
May 18 - Grimsby  
May 19 - Lincoln  
May 20 - Pelham  
May 25 - Niagara-on-the-Lake  
May 26 - Fort Erie  
May 27 - St. Catharines  
June 22 - Regional Council  
June 24 - Regional Social Services,

Public Hearings of the Planning and Development Committee,  
Regional Niagara, May 1976.

May 11 - St. Catharines  
May 12 - Niagara-on-the-Lake  
May 13 - Niagara Falls  
May 17 - Pelham  
May 18 - Lincoln  
May 19 - Grimsby



# APPENDIX V

## MEETINGS OF REGIONAL, AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND STANDING COMMITTEES

<u>Body</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Regularity</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Open Press</u>	<u>To Public</u>
<u>Regional Municipality of Niagara</u>					
<u>Regional Council</u>	Thurs	1st & 3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Social Service Committee	Tues	bi-weekly	10:30 a.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance Committee	Wed	bi-weekly	11:00 a.m.	Yes	Yes
Planning Committee	Wed	almost weekly	1:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Public Works Committee	Thurs	almost weekly	2:00 p.m.*	Yes	Yes
<u>City of St. Catharines</u>					
<u>City Council</u>	Mon.	alternate	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Executive Committee	Wed	opposite to Council	4:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
General Committee	Mon	opposite to Council	6:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
<u>City of Niagara Falls</u>					
<u>City Council</u>	Mon	weekly	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
No Standing Committees					
<u>City of Welland</u>					
<u>City Council **</u>	Tues	1st & 3rd	7:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance Committee	Chair ***	--	--	No	No

\* at 11:00 a.m. if Regional Council Meeting in the evening

\*\* goes into committee of the whole to discuss personnel matters and land

<u>Body</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Regularity</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Press</u>	<u>Public</u>
<u>City of Welland (cont'd.)</u>					
Parks, Rec. & Arena Com.	Chair	--	--	Yes	Yes
Planning Committee	Chair	--	--	No	No
Public Works Committee	Chair	--	--	Yes	Yes
<u>City of Port Colborne</u>					
City Council	Mon	2nd & 4th	7:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance Committee	Mon	1st & 3rd	7:00 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Public Works	Mon	1st & 3rd	7:00 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Planning & Development	Wed	2nd & 4th	7:00 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Parks & Recreation	Wed	2nd & 4th	7:00 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
<u>City of Thorold</u>					
City Council	Tues	1st & 3rd	8:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
<u>Committee of the Whole</u>					
Finance & Personnel	Chair	--	--	Yes	Yes
Fire & Light	Wed	2nd	4:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Parks & Recreation	Chair	--	--	Yes	Yes
Planning & Development	Mon	2nd	5:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Public Works	Thurs	2nd	7:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
	Mon	2nd	5:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
<u>Town of Fort Erie</u>					
Town Council	Mon	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
<u>By-law &amp; Planning</u>					
Finance Committee	Thurs	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Roads	Wed	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
	Tues	1st & 3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Sewer, Water & Sanitation	Mon	1st & 3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt

<u>Body</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Regularity</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Press</u>	<u>Public</u>
<u>Town of Grimsby</u> Town Council	Mon	1st & 3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance	Mon	2nd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Public Works	Wed	2nd & 4th	9:15 a.m.	Yes	Yes
Planning & Development	Thurs	1st & 3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Recreation & Parks	Tues	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
<u>Town of Lincoln</u> Town Council	Mon	1st & 3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance & Admin.	Tues	2nd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Planning	Mon	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Recreation & Parks	Tues	3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
Public Works	Thurs	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	By Appt
<u>Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake</u> Town Council *	Mon	2nd & 4th	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Historic Advisory	Wed	3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Industrial Development	Chair	--	--	Yes	Yes
Personnel	Chair	--	--	No	No
Recreation	Tues	3rd	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Senior Citizens	Chair	--	--	Yes	Yes
<u>Town of Pelham</u> Town Council	Mon	Alternate	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance	Mon	Alter to council	7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Planning & Development	Tues	After council	7:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Public Works	Tues	Alter to council	7:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Recreation	Thurs	3rd	7 or 7:30 p.m.	Yes	Yes

\* Council Caucus and Committee of the whole not open to the public.



<u>Body</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Regularity</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Press</u>	<u>Public</u>
Township of Wainfleet Township Council	Tues	1st & 3rd	8:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Committee of the Whole	Mon.	each	8:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Township of West Lincoln Township Council	Mon	1st & 3rd	8:00 p.m.	Yes	Yes
Finance & Admin	Wed	prior to Council	8:00 p.m.	No *	By Appt
Fire & Sanitation	Mon	4th	8:00 p.m.	No *	By Appt
Parks & Recreation	Mon	2nd	8:00 p.m.	No *	By Appt
Planning	Wed	1st	7:00 p.m.	No *	By Appt
Roads & Public Works	Wed	2nd	1:00 p.m.	No *	By Appt

\* May attend on special invitation of Committee.

# APPENDIX VI

## BREAKDOWN OF RESPONSES OF REGIONAL COUNCILLORS TO QUESTIONS DEALING WITH THE MASS MEDIA. (Percentages in brackets.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Response
1. Most newspapers of Region have * given satisfactory coverage of the affairs of the Region.	-	3 (14)	16 (76)	-	2 (10)
2. Most radio stations of the * Region have given satisfactory coverage of the affairs of the Region.	1 (5)	1 (5)	16 (75)**	1 (5)	2 (10)
3. The media generally have given * preferential treatment to municipal politics to the detriment of regional coverage.	1 (5)	10 (47)	6 (29)	1 (5)	3 (14)
4. No media voice speaks adequately * for the Regional Municipality.	-	7 (33)	8 (39)**	3 (14)	3 (14)
5. Regional Government cannot function effectively without a media voice to reflect a regional viewpoint.	1 (5)	4 (19)	8 (38)	5 (24)	3 (14)
6. The Regional Municipality should appoint an Information Officer.	2 (10)	5 (24)	10 (47)	1 (5)	3 (14)

\* Respondents were given an opportunity to identify media upon which judgments were made and to illustrate responses with examples of their views.





# THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

APPENDIX VII

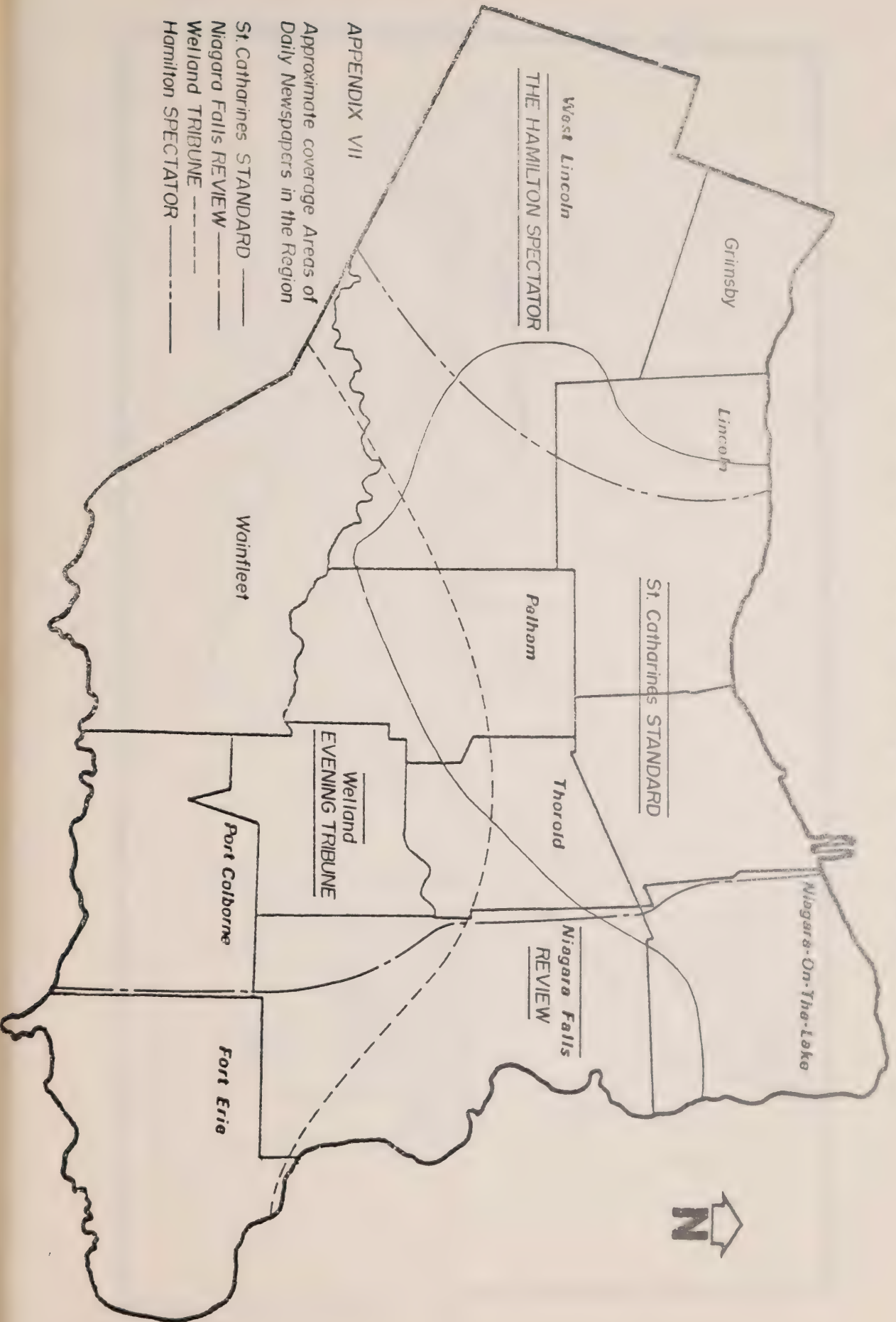
Approximate coverage Areas of  
Daily Newspapers in the Region

St. Catharines STANDARD ———

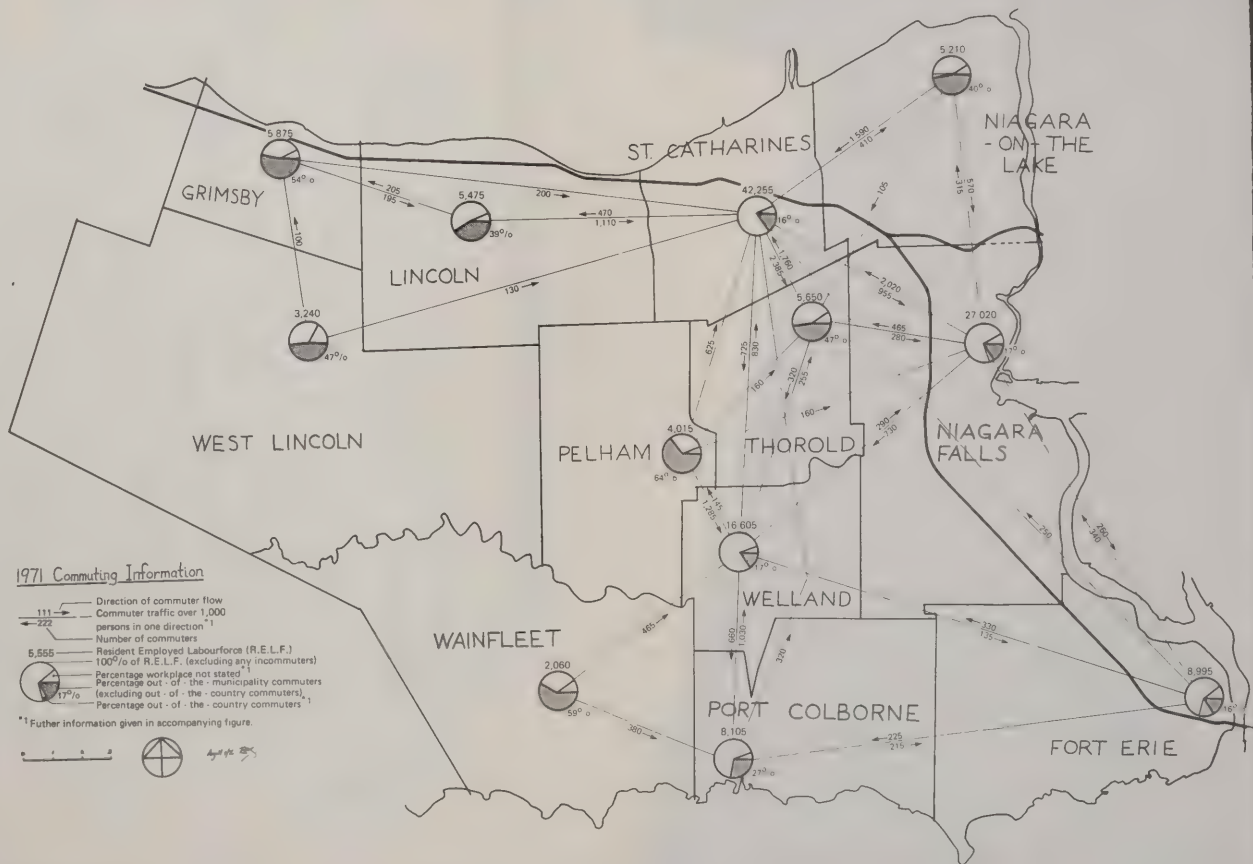
Niagara Falls REVIEW ———

Welland TRIBUNE - - - - -

Hamilton SPECTATOR - - - - -



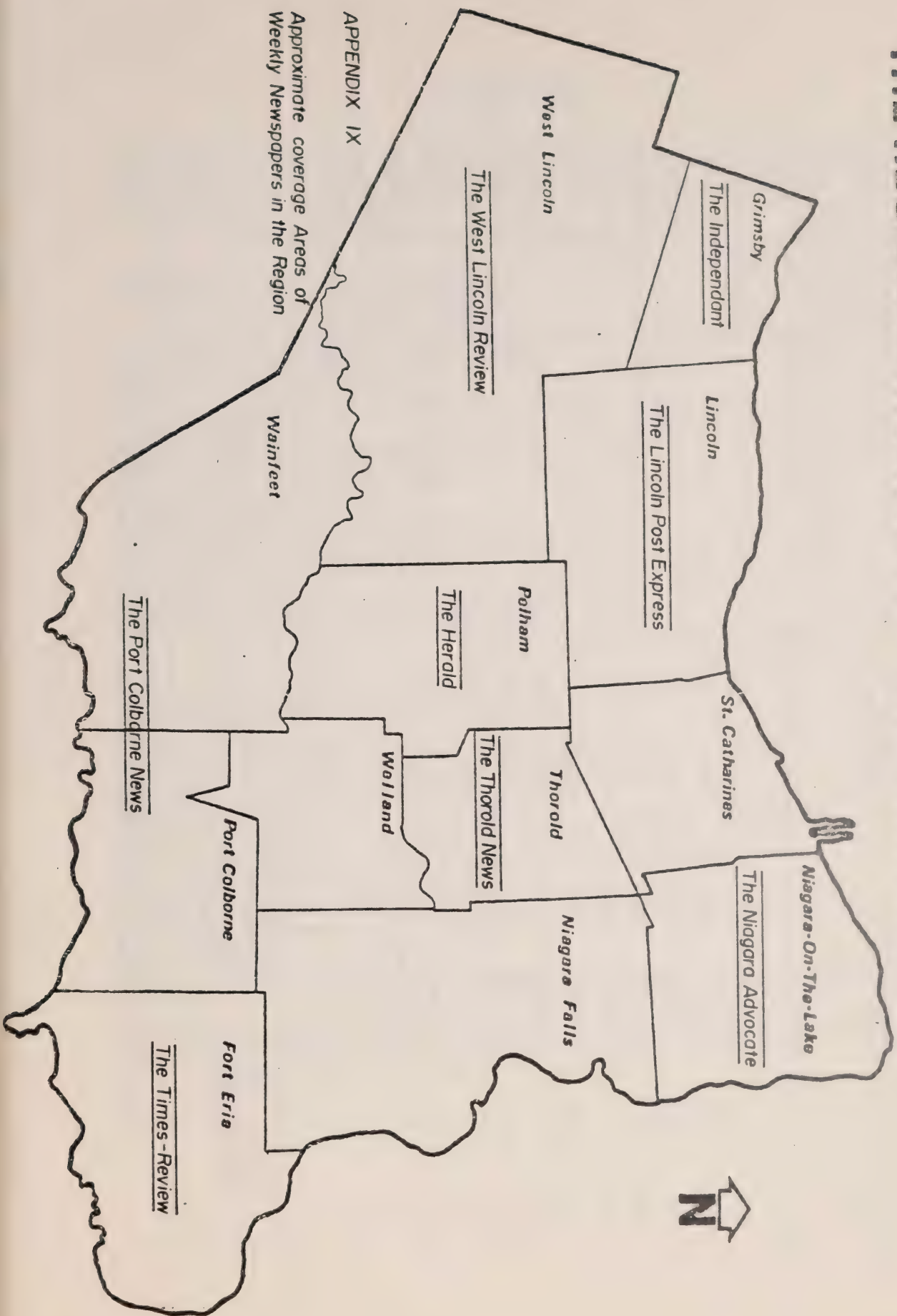








# THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA



## APPENDIX IX

Approximate coverage Areas of  
Weekly Newspapers in the Region

# APPENDIX X

## THE AVAILABILITY TO THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC OF AGENDA AND MINUTES OF REGIONAL AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

	Council		Standing Committees	
	Available to Press Agenda Minutes	Available to Public Agenda Minutes	Available to Press Agenda Minutes	Available to Public Agenda Minutes
Regional Niagara	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
St. Catharines	Yes	1	1	No
Niagara Falls	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Welland	Yes	No	No Committees	No
Port Colborne	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Thorold	Yes	No	Yes	No
Fort Erie	Yes	No	Yes	No
Grimsby	No	No	No	No
Lincoln	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Niagara-on-the-Lake	Yes	No	1	No
Pelham	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Wainfleet	No	No	No	No
West Lincoln	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

1. - available at Clerk's discretion.

N.B. This appendix may not be totally accurate. In some instances conflicting responses were received to our enquiries and it seemed difficult to establish what actually was the policy of the council concerned. Some of the "no" entries might more accurately read "no policy". In most instances where minutes are available to the public, a fee is charged for duplication ranging from cost to 50 cents per page.



APPENDIX XI

MATERIAL CONTAINED IN INFORMATION KITS RECEIVED FROM THE CLERK'S OFFICE AND THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT, REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

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Material Common to Both Kits

Sources and Publication - Recreation and Environment  
Notes on the Niagara Fruit Belt  
General Agriculture  
Review of Historical Economic Growth and Locational Characteristics  
Niagara Region Geology  
Geological Divisions (Map)  
The Niagara Parkway  
Notes on the Welland Canal  
Historical Sketch of the Region  
Region Niagara (Map)  
Regional Niagara - Political Boundaries (Map)  
Regional Niagara - Population and Area  
Office Consolidation - Regional Niagara Policy Plan

Additional From the Clerk's Office

Regional Niagara - Communities (Map)  
Regional Niagara - Drainage Systems (Map)  
Regional Niagara - Railroads (Map)  
Regional Niagara - Status of Local Official Plans '74  
Regional Niagara - Status of Zoning By-laws  
Regional Niagara - Land Division Committee  
Region Niagara - Picture It  
Regional Municipality of Niagara - By-Law 149-92-71  
Regional Government in Niagara  
Area Municipal Councils  
Regional Municipality of Niagara Telephone Index - Department Heads  
Regional Municipality of Niagara - Area Municipal Clerks  
Regional Municipality of Niagara - Council: 75-76  
1975-76 Municipal Directory

Additional from the Planning Department

Regional Niagara Planning  
Analysis of Major Industry Groups  
Perspectives on Growth  
The Niagara Escarpment  
Regional Niagara Population Projection  
Residential Development in Regional Niagara  
Population Growth in the Niagara Region  
The Regional Municipality of Niagara Economic & Financial  
Survey





